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ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Volume XV, Number 4 Autumn, 1955

J. F. POWERS:

Blue Island

On the day the Daviccis moved into their house, Ethel was visited by a "Welcome Wagon" hostess bearing small gifts from local merchants, but after that by nobody for three weeks, only Ralph's relatives and door-to-door salesmen. And then Mrs Hancock came smiling. They sat on the matching green chairs which glinted with threads of what appeared to be gold. In the picture window, the overstimulated plants grew wild in pots.

Mrs Hancock had guessed right about Ethel and Ralph, that they were newlyweds. "Am I right in thinking you're of Swedish descent, Mrs Davicky? You, I mean?"

Ethel smiled, as if taking a compliment, and said nothing.

"I only ask because so many people in the neighborhood are. I'm not, myself," said Mrs Hancock. She was unnaturally pink, with tinted blue hair. Her own sharp-looking teeth were transparent at the tips. "But you're so fair."

"My maiden name was Taylor," Ethel said. It was, and it wasn't —it was the name she'd got at the orphanage. Wanting a cigarette, she pushed the silver box on the coffee table toward Mrs Hancock.

Mrs Hancock used one of her purple claws to pry up the first cigarette from the top layer. "A good old American name like mine."

Like *what?* Ethel wanted to ask. Mrs Hancock wasn't giving her maiden name, though.

"Is your husband in business, Mrs Davicky?"

"Yes, he is." Ethel put the lighter—a simple column of silver, the mate to the box—to Mrs Hancock's cigarette and then to her own.

"Not here in Blue Island?"

"No." From here on, it could be difficult. Ralph was afraid that people in the neighborhood would disapprove of his business. "In Minneapolis." The Mohawk Inn, where Ethel had worked as a waitress, was first-class—thick steaks, dark lights, an electric organ —but Ralph's other places, for which his brothers were listed as the owners, were cut-rate bars on or near Washington Avenue. "He's a distributor," Ethel said, heading her off. "Non-alcoholic beverages mostly." It was true. Ralph had taken over his family's wholesale wine business, never much in Minneapolis, and got it to pay by converting to soft drinks.

Mrs Hancock was noticing the two paintings which, because of their size and the lowness of the ceiling, hung two feet from the floor, but she didn't comment on them. "Lovely, lovely," she said, referring to the driftwood lamp in the picture window. A faraway noise came from her stomach. She raised her voice. "But you've been lonely, haven't you? I could see it when I came in. It's this neighborhood."

"It's very nice," said Ethel quickly. Maybe Mrs Hancock was at war with the neighbors, looking for an ally.

"I suppose you know Mrs Nilgren," said Mrs Hancock, nodding to the left.

"No, but I've seen her. Once she waved."

"She's nice. Tied down with children, though." Mrs Hancock nodded to the right. "How about old Mrs Mann?"

"I don't think anybody's there now."

"The Manns are away! California. So you don't know anybody yet?"

"No."

"I'm surprised you haven't met some of them at the Cashway."

"I never go there," Ethel said. "Ralph—that's my husband—he wants me to trade at the home-owned stores."

"Oh?" Mrs Hancock's stomach cut loose again. "I didn't know people still felt that way." Mrs Hancock looked down the street, in the direction of the little corner store. "Do they do much business?"

"No," said Ethel. The old couple who ran it were suspicious of her, she thought, for buying so much from them. The worst of it was that Ralph had told her to open a charge account, and she

hadn't, and she never knew when he'd stop there and try to use it. There was a sign up in the store that said: In God We Trust—All Others Pay Cash.

"I'll bet that's it," Mrs Hancock was saying. "I'm afraid people are pretty clannish around here—and the Wagners have so many friends. They live one-two-three-five houses down." Mrs Hancock had been counting the houses across the street. "Mr Wagner's the manager of the Cashway."

Ethel was holding her breath.

"I'm afraid so," said Mrs Hancock.

Ethel sighed. It was Ralph's fault. She'd always wanted to trade at the Cashway.

Mrs Hancock threw back her head, inhaling, and her eyelids, like a doll's, came down. "I'm afraid it's your move, Mrs Davicky."

Ethel didn't feel that it was her move at all and must have shown it.

Mrs Hancock sounded impatient. "Invite 'em in. Have 'em in for a morning coffee."

"I couldn't do that," Ethel said. "I've never been to one." She'd only read about coffees in the women's magazines to which Ralph subscribed her. "I wouldn't know how."

"Nothing to it. Rolls, coffee, and come as you are. Of course nobody really does, not really." Mrs Hancock's stomach began again. "Oh, shut up," she said to it. "I've just come from one too many." Mrs Hancock made a face, showing Ethel a brown mohair tongue. She laughed at Ethel. "Cheer up. It wasn't in this neighborhood."

Ethel felt better. "I'll certainly think about it," she said.

Mrs Hancock rose, smiling, and went over to the telephone. "You'll do it right now," she said, as though being an older woman entitled her to talk that way to Ethel. "They're probably dying to get inside this lovely house."

After a moment, Ethel, who was already on her feet, having thought that Mrs Hancock was leaving, went over and sat down to telephone. In the wall mirror she saw how she must appear to Mrs Hancock. When the doorbell had rung, she'd been in too much of a hurry to see who it was to do anything about her lips and hair. "Will they know who I am?"

"Of course." Mrs Hancock squatted on the white leather hassock with the phone book. "And you don't have to say I'm coming. Oh, I'll come. I'll be more than happy to. You don't need me, though. All you need is confidence."

And Mrs Hancock was right. Ethel called eight neighbors, and six could come on Wednesday morning, which Mrs Hancock had thought would be the best time for her. Two of the six even sounded anxious to meet Ethel, and, surprisingly, Mrs Wagner was one of these.

"You did it all yourself," said Mrs Hancock.

"With your help," said Ethel, feeling indebted to Mrs Hancock, intimately so. It was if they'd cleaned the house together.

They were saying goodbye on the front stoop when Ralph rolled into the driveway. Ordinarily at noon he parked just outside the garage, but that day he drove in—without acknowledging them in any way. "Mr Daveechee," Ethel commented. For Mrs Hancock, after listening to Ethel pronounce her name for all the neighbors, was still saying "Davicky."

Mrs Hancock stayed long enough to get the idea that Ralph wasn't going to show himself. She went down the front walk saying, "'Bye now."

While Mrs Hancock was getting into her car, which seemed a little old for the neighborhood, Ralph came out of the garage.

Mrs Hancock waved and nodded—which, Ethel guessed, was for Ralph's benefit, the best Mrs Hancock could do to introduce herself at the distance. She drove off. Too late, Ralph's hand moved up to wave. He stared after Mrs Hancock's moving car with a look that just didn't belong to him, Ethel thought, a look that she hadn't seen on his face until they moved out to Blue Island.

During lunch, Ethel tried to reproduce her conversation with Mrs Hancock, but she couldn't tell Ralph enough. He wanted to know the neighbors' names, and she could recall the names of only three. Mrs Wagner, one of them, was very popular in the neighborhood, and her husband . . . "You go to the Cashway then. Some of 'em sounded all right, huh?" "Ralph, they all sounded all right, real friendly. The man next door sells insurance. Mr Nilgren."

Ethel remembered that one of the husbands was a lawyer and told Ralph that. He left the table. A few minutes later, Ethel heard him driving away.

It had been a mistake to mention the lawyer to Ralph. It had made him think of the shooting they'd had at the Bow Wow, one of the joints. There had been a mixup, and Ralph's home address had appeared in the back pages of one of the papers when the shooting was no longer news. Ethel doubted that the neighbors had seen the little item. Ralph might be right about the lawyer, though, who

would probably have to keep up with everything like that.

Ralph wouldn't have worried so much about such a little thing in the old days. He was different now. It was hard to get him to smile. Ethel could remember how he would damn the Swedes for slapping higher and higher taxes on liquor and tobacco, but now, when she pointed out a letter some joker had written to the paper suggesting a tax on coffee, or when she showed him the picture of the wife of the Minnesota senator—the fearless one—christening an ore boat with a bottle of milk, which certainly should've given Ralph a laugh, he was silent.

It just made Ethel sick to see him at the windows, watching Mr Nilgren, a sandy-haired, dim-looking man who wore plaid shirts and a red cap in the yard. Mr Nilgren would be raking out his hedge, or wiring up the skinny little trees, or washing his car if it was Sunday morning, and there Ralph would be, behind a drape. One warm day Ethel had seen Mr Nilgren in the yard with a golf club, and had said, "He should get some of those little balls that don't go anywhere." It had been painful to see Ralph then. She could almost *hear* him thinking. He would get some of those balls and give them to Mr Nilgren as a present. No, it would look funny if he did. Then he got that sick look that seemed to come from wanting to do a favor for someone who might not let him do it.

A couple of days later Ethel learned that Ralph had gone to an indoor driving range to take golf lessons. He came home happy, with a club he was supposed to swing in his spare time. He'd made a friend too, another beginner. They were going to have the same schedule and be measured for clubs. During his second lesson, however, he quit. Ethel wasn't surprised, for Ralph, though strong, was awkward. She was better than he was with a hammer and nails, and he mutilated the heads of screws. He must have been badly surprised to discover he was just as bad when he went back the second time, after carrying the club around the house for three days. Ethel asked about the other beginner, and at first Ralph acted as though she'd made him up, and then he hotly rejected the word "friend," which she'd used. Finally he said, "If you ask me, that bastard's played before!"

That was just like him. At the coffee, Ethel planned to ask the women to come over soon with their husbands, but she was afraid some of the husbands wouldn't take to Ralph. Probably he could buy insurance from Mr Nilgren. He would want to do something for the ones who weren't selling something, though—if there were any like

that—and they might misunderstand Ralph. He was used to buying the drinks. He should relax and take the neighbors as they came. Or move.

She didn't know why they were there anyway. It was funny. After they were married, before they left on their honeymoon, Ralph had driven her out to Blue Island and walked her through the house. That was all there was to it. Sometimes she wondered if he'd won the house at cards. She didn't know why they were there when they could just as well be living at Minnetonka or White Bear where they could keep a launch like the one they'd hired in Florida—and where the houses were far apart and neighbors wouldn't matter so much. What were they waiting for? Some of the things they owned, she knew, were for later. They didn't need sterling for eighteen in Blue Island. And the two big pictures were definitely for later.

She didn't know what Ralph liked about his picture, which was of an Indian who looked all-in sitting on a horse that looked all-in, but he had gone to the trouble of ordering it from a regular art store. Hers was more cheerful, the palace of the Doge of Venice, Italy. Ralph hadn't wanted her to have it at first. He was really down on anything foreign. (There were never any Italian dishes on the menu at the Mohawk.) But she believed he liked her for wanting that picture, for having a weakness for things Italian, for him—and even for his father and mother whom he was always sorry to see and hadn't invited to the house. When they came anyway, with his brothers, their wives and children (and wine, which Ralph wouldn't touch), Ralph was in and out, upstairs and down, never long in the same room with them, never encouraging them to stay when they started to leave. They called him "Rock" or "Rocky," but Ralph didn't always answer to that. To one of the little boys who had followed him down into the basement, Ethel had heard him growl, "The name's Ralph"—that to a nine-year-old. His family must have noticed the change in Ralph, but they were wrong if they blamed her, just because she was a little young for him, a blonde and not a Catholic—not that Ralph went to church. In fact, she thought Ralph would be better off with his family for his friends, instead of counting so much on the neighbors. She liked Ralph's family and enjoyed having them in the house.

And if Ralph's family hadn't come around, the neighbors might even think they weren't properly married, that they had a love nest going there. Ethel didn't blame the neighbors for being suspicious of her and Ralph. Mr Nilgren in his shirt and cap that did nothing

for him, he belonged there, but not Ralph, so dark, with his dark blue suits, pearl grey hats, white jacquard shirts—and with her, with her looks and platinum hair. She tried to dress down, to look like an older woman, when she went out. The biggest thing in their favor, but it wasn't noticeable yet, was the fact that she was pregnant.

Sometimes she thought Ralph must be worrying about the baby—as she was—about the kind of life a little kid would have in a neighborhood where his father and mother didn't know anybody. There were two pre-school children at the Nilgrens'. Would they play with the Davicci kid? Ethel didn't ever want to see that sick look of Ralph's on a child of hers.

That afternoon two men in white overalls arrived from Minneapolis in a white truck and washed the windows, inside and out, including the basement and garage. Ralph had sent them. Ethel sat in the dining room and polished silver to the music of *Carmen* on records. She played whole operas when Ralph wasn't home.

In bed that night Ralph made her run through the neighbors again. Seven for sure, counting Mrs Hancock. "Is that all?" Ethel said she was going to call the neighbor who hadn't been home. "When?" When she got the number from Mrs Hancock. "When's that?" When Mrs Hancock phoned, if she phoned . . . and that was where Ralph believed Ethel had really fallen down. She didn't have Mrs Hancock's number—or address—and there wasn't a Hancock listed for Blue Island in the phone book. "How about next door?" Mrs Nilgren was still coming. "The other side?" The Manns were still away, in California, and Ralph knew it. "They might come back. Ever think of that? You don't wanna leave them out." *Them,* he'd said, showing Ethel what was expected of her. He wanted those husbands. Ethel promised to watch for the return of the Manns. "They could come home in the night." Ethel reminded Ralph that a person in her condition needed a lot of sleep, and Ralph left her alone then.

Before Ralph was up the next morning, Ethel started to clean the house. Ralph was afraid the house-cleaning wouldn't be done right (*he* spoke of her condition) and wanted to get another crew of professionals out from Minneapolis. Ethel said it wouldn't look good. She said the neighbors expected them to do their own housecleaning—*and window washing.* Ralph shut up.

When he came home for lunch, Ethel was able to say that Mrs Hancock had called and that the neighbor who hadn't been home

could come to the coffee. Ethel had talked to her, and she had sounded very friendly. "That's three of 'em, huh?" Ethel was tired of that one, but told him they'd *all* sounded friendly to her. "Mrs Hancock okay?" Mrs Hancock was okay. More than happy to be coming. Ralph asked if Ethel had got Mrs Hancock's phone number and address. No. "Why not?" Mrs Hancock would be there in the morning. That was why—and Ralph should get a hold on himself.

In the afternoon, after he was gone, Ethel put on one of her new conservative dresses and took the bus to Minneapolis to buy some Swedish pastry. She wanted something better than she could buy in Blue Island. In the window of the store where they'd bought Ralph's Indian, there were some little miniatures, lovely New England snow scenes. She hesitated to go in when she saw the sissy clerk was on duty again. He had made Ralph sore, asking how he'd like to have the Indian framed in birch bark. The Mohawk was plastered with birch bark, and Ralph thought the sissy recognized him and was trying to be funny. "This is going into my home!" Ralph had said and ordered the gold frame costing six times as much as the Indian. However, he'd taken the sissy's advice about having a light put on it. Ethel hesitated, but she went in. In his way, the sissy was very nice, and Ethel went home with five little Old English prints. When she'd asked about the pictures in the window, the New England ones, calling them "landscapes," he'd said "snowscapes" and looked disgusted, as if they weren't what she should want.

When she got home, she hung the prints over the sofa where there was a blank space, and they looked fine in their shiny black frames. She didn't say anything to Ralph, hoping he'd notice them, but he didn't until after supper. "Hey, what is this?" he said. He bounced off the sofa, confronting her. "Ralph, they're cute!" "Not in my home!" "Ralph, they're humorous!" The clerk had called them that. But Ralph called them drunks and whores. He had Ethel feeling ashamed of herself. It was hard to believe that she could have felt they were just fat and funny and just what their living room needed, as the clerk had said. Ralph took them down. "Man or woman sell 'em to you?" Ethel, seeing what he had in mind, knew she couldn't tell him where she'd got them. She lied. "I was in Dayton's . . ." "A woman—all right, then you take 'em back!"

She was scared. Something like that was enough to make Ralph regret *marrying* her—and to remind her again that she couldn't have made him. If there had been a showdown between them, he would've learned about her first pregnancy. It would've been easy for a lawyer

to find out about that. She'd listened to an old doctor who'd told her to go ahead and have it, that she'd love her little baby, who hadn't lived, but there would be a record anyway. She wasn't sorry about going to a regular hospital to have it, though it made it harder for her now, having that record. She'd done what she could for the baby. She hated to think of the whole thing, but when she did, as she did that evening, she knew she'd done her best.

It might have been a bad evening for her, with Ralph brooding on her faults, if a boy hadn't come to the door selling chances on a raffle. Ralph bought all the boy had, over five dollars' worth, and asked where he lived in the neighborhood. "I live in Minneapolis." "Huh? Whatcha doin' way out here then?" The boy said it was easier to sell chances out there. Ethel, who had been doing the dishes, returned to the sink before Ralph could see her. He went back to his *Reader's Digest,* and she slipped off to bed, early, hoping his mind would be occupied with the boy if she kept out of sight.

He came to bed after the ten o'clock news. "You awake?" Ethel, awake, but afraid he wanted to talk neighbors, moaned remotely. "If anybody comes to the door sellin' anything, make sure it's somebody local."

In the morning, Ralph checked over the silver and china laid out in the dining room and worried over the pastry. "Fresh?" Fresh! She'd put it in the deep freeze right away and it hadn't even thawed out yet. "Is *that* all?" That was all, and it was more than enough. She certainly didn't need a whole quart of whipping cream. "Want me to call up for something to go with this?" No. "Turkey or a ham? I maybe got time to go myself if I go right now." He carried on like that until ten o'clock, when she got rid of him, saying, "You wouldn't want to be the only man, Ralph."

Then she was on her own, wishing Mrs Hancock would come early and see her through the first minutes.

But Mrs Wagner was the first to arrive. After that, the neighbors seemed to ring the bell at regular intervals. Ethel met them at the door, hung their coats in the hall closet, returning each time to Mrs Wagner in the kitchen. They were all very nice, but Mrs Wagner was the nicest.

"Now let's just let everything be," she said after they'd arranged the food in the dining room. "Let's go in and meet your friends."

They found the neighbors standing before the two pictures. Ethel snapped on the spot lights. She heard little cries of pleasure all around.

"Heirlooms!"

"Is Mr Davitchy a collector?"

"Just likes good things, huh?"

"I just love this lamp."

"I just *stare* at it when I go by."

"So do I."

Ethel, looking at her driftwood lamp, her plants, and beyond, stood in a haze of pleasure. Earlier, when she was giving her attention to Mrs Nilgren (who was telling about the trouble "Carl" had with his trees), Ethel had seen Ralph's car cruise by, she thought, and now again, but this time there was no doubt of it. She recognized the rather old one parked in front as Mrs Hancock's, but where was Mrs Hancock?

"Hello, everybody!"

Mrs Hancock had let herself in, and was hanging up her coat.

Ethel disappeared into the kitchen. She carried the coffee pot, which had been on *low,* into the dining room where they were supposed to come and help themselves. She stood by the pot, nervous, ready to pour, hoping that someone would look in and see that she was ready, but no one did.

She went to see what they were doing. They were still sitting down, listening to Mrs Hancock. She'd had trouble with her car. That was why she was late. She saw Ethel. "I can see you want to get started," she said, rising. "So do I."

Ethel returned to the dining room and stood by the coffee pot.

Mrs Hancock came first. "Starved," she said. She carried off her coffee, roll, and two of the little Swedish cookies, and Ethel heard her in the living room rallying the others.

They came then, quietly, and Ethel poured. When all had been served, she started another pot of coffee, and took her cup and a cookie—she wasn't hungry—into the living room.

Mrs Hancock, sitting on the hassock, had a bottle in her hand. On the rug around her were some brushes and one copper pan. "Ladies," she was saying, "now here's something new." Noticing Ethel, Mrs Hancock picked up the pan. "How'd you like to have this for your kitchen? Here."

Ethel crossed the room. She carried the pan back to where she'd been standing.

"This is no ordinary polish," continued Mrs Hancock, shaking the bottle vigorously. "This is what is known as liquefied ointment. It possesses rare medicinal properties. It renews wood. It gives you

a base for polishing—something to shine that simply wasn't there before. There's nothing like it on the market—not in the polish field. It's a Shipshape product, and you all know what that means." Mrs Hancock opened the bottle and dabbed at the air. "Note the handy applicator." Snatching a cloth from her lap, she rubbed the leg of the coffee table—"remove all foreign matter first"—and dabbed at the leg with the applicator. "This does for wood what liniment does for horses. It relaxes the grain, injects new life, *soothes* the wood. Well, how do you like it?" she called over to Ethel.

Ethel glanced down at the pan, forgotten in her hand.

"Pass it around," said Mrs Hancock.

Ethel offered the pan to Mrs Nilgren, who was nearest.

"I've seen it, thanks."

Ethel moved to the next neighbor.

"I've seen it."

Ethel moved on. "Mrs Wagner, have you?"

"Many times"—with a smile.

Ethel looked back where she'd been standing before she started out with the pan—and went the other way, finally stepping into the hallway. There she saw a canvas duffle bag on the side of which was embossed a pennant flying the word SHIPSHAPE. And hearing Mrs Hancock—"And this is new, girls. Can you all see from where you're sitting?"—Ethel began to move again. She kept right on going.

Upstairs, in the bedroom, lying down, she noticed the pan in her hand. She shook it off. It hit the headboard of the bed, denting the traditional mahogany, and came to rest in the satin furrow between Ralph's pillow and hers. Oh, God! In a minute, she'd have to get up and go down to them and do *something* . . . but then she heard the coat hangers banging back empty in the closet downstairs, and the front door opening and, finally, closing. There was a moment of perfect silence in the house before her sudden sob, then another moment, before she heard someone coming, climbing the carpeted stairs.

Ethel foolishly thought it would be Mrs Wagner, but of course it was Mrs Hancock, after her pan.

She tiptoed into the room, adjusted the venetian blind, and seated herself lightly on the edge of the bed. "Don't think I don't know how you feel," she said. "Not that it shows yet. I wasn't *sure,* dear." She looked into Ethel's eyes, frightening her.

As though only changing positions, Ethel moved the hand that Mrs Hancock was after.

"My ointment would fix that, restore the surface," said Mrs Hancock, her finger searching the little wound in the headboard. She began to explain, gently—like someone with a terrible temper warming up: "When we first started having these little Shipshape parties, they didn't tell each other. They do now, oh yes, or they would if I'd let them. I'm onto them. They're just in it for the mops now. You get one, you know, for having the party in your home. It's collapsible, ideal for the small home or travel. But the truth is you let me down! Why, when you left the room the way you did, you didn't give them any choice. Why, I don't think there's one of that crowd—with the exception of May Wagner—that isn't using one of my free mops! Why, they just walked out on me!"

Ethel, closing her eyes, saw Mrs Hancock alone, on the hassock, with her products all around her.

"It's a lot of pan for the money," Mrs Hancock was saying now. She reached over Ethel's body for it. "You'll love your little pan," she said, fondling it.

Ethel's eyes were resisting Mrs Hancock, but her right hand betrayed her.

"Here?" Mrs Hancock opened a drawer, took out a purse, and handed it over, saying, "Only $12.95."

Ethel found a five and a ten.

"You *do* want the ointment, don't you? The pan and the large bottle come to a little more than this, but it's not enough to worry about."

Mrs Hancock got up, apparently to leave.

Ethel thought of something. "You do live in Blue Island, don't you?" Ralph would be sure to ask about that—if she had to tell him. And she would!

"Not any more, thank God."

Ethel nodded. She wasn't surprised.

Mrs Hancock, at the door, peeked out—reminding Ethel of a bored visitor looking for a nurse who would tell her it was time to leave the patient. "I'll leave your ointment and mop downstairs," she said. "I just know everything's going to be all right." Then she smiled and left.

When, toward noon, Ethel heard Ralph come into the driveway, she got out of bed, straightened the spread, and concealed the pan in the closet. She went to the window and gazed down upon the crown of his pearl grey hat. He was carrying a big club of roses.

YVAN GOLL:

Landless John Circles the Earth Seven Times

Translated by William Carlos Williams

At blond dawn
A life unfurled
He journeys far
To the great world

He departs alone
The mystery soldier
A simple flower
In his button-hole

Smiling always
Blinking clear
He deceives love
At each frontier

In the cities
Boiling with beer
All gaiety
Loses its cheer

At the port bars
Watched for his grace
The strong boys
Hate his face

Beloved by the seas
And fever isles
Bitter winds
Kiss him whiles

Seven times
He circles the earth
Bearing his faith
In his head's girth

Barber bootblack
Priest corsair
Emperor bankrupt
Wastrel's fair

It's small matter
The world to course
To eat fire
To make wars

Oh the same trouble
Everywhere
Coming and going
Walk and stair

Morning and night
Bread and thirst
Flesh and dream
Here! Eat and burst!

Individual
Sad heart and bare
Wordless and nameless
His own despair

No papers left
No heirs found
Beg for your death
At the burying-ground

Landless John Leads the Caravan

Translated by William Carlos Williams

Have I a hundred years since or
A hundred thousand tramped these wastes
With a track more vulnerable
Than fire of a sun that hastes?

My camel leads the caravan
Through centuries of rusted sand

To find as might any profane wind
The key to the oblivion land

My great-grandparents long since
Have worked this sea and no less
Could their passing shadow have brought
To yoke the ancient nothingness

Although life's mortal light
Would wring their hearts about by day
Still they had a candle lit
For antique love to find the way

In me their ancient skeleton
Of God calcined by the years
And my new flesh tries as it may
To fill it with heavy cares

I hear the red wolf that howls
On the cavern of my blood
Cracking the bones at nightfall
Of the dream again abroad

Sail on sail on slow dromedaries
And traverse eternity
From the quaternary dawns
To the tomb's near certainty

My kin with limbs of gold and ebony
Die of thirst and of hope the most
At both my wrists I open the veins
That may prove to them a host

O wish that my love would rot
And never see light again
If by this final sacrifice
A young god be born in men

If without Alp to water
From the desert's lifeless skin
The freshness of a rose should rise
And a cloak of sudden green

No bitch will I need to chase
The hunger of a jackal
Enough that my faith revive
And the aurora of my choral

Offering those who covet
Slow camel and proud lion
Salt from my weak moist hand
The strength of my religion

John Death

Translated by William Jay Smith

I run to the plains
That are loud with streams
Where fountains climbing
Tell their dreams

I enter the dark
And quiet glade
Of the tribes of the dead
The peoples of shade

There under the ivy
The bare veined stone
My youthful father
Keeps watch alone

Beneath the delirium
Of glow-worms' light
His patient smile
Braves endless night

The whole universe
In him resounds
Autumnal voices
And winter sounds

By a howling storm
Are the heavens torn?

Or is it the blare
Of Gabriel's horn?

Of a sudden the brown
Night deepens to gray
The full moon reddens
And rots away

Biblical tomb
Will you open for me
To the probing bomb
Of memory?

Beneath a black star's
Total eclipse
Do I hear a descending
Apocalypse?

The alders dance
Distinct and clear
Already their trance
Awakens my fear

Church steeples nearby
With heads of tin
Nod bunches of bells
Like mannikins

Sorcerer owls
Their eyes open wide
From the willows watch
On every side

"Father!" I cry
In my mad monotone
While an owl coughs
On its perch of stone

Then among brambles
John Dying John Death
My feeble body
Sinks to the earth

RADCLIFFE SQUIRES:

Self Land

The distant knowledge of myself is a land whose unreality
Has become less real with roads and beehives and
Alfalfa fields, stretched tenderly and cautiously
In summer storms. But fields, hives, roads come to an end
At a high lake, like footprints that turn into the sea.

I mean, suddenly there is no road, and you're aware
The element is new. You need claws or wings or gills
To tide you over catastrophic shifts, for here
This lake refuses color from the sky but takes the cruel
Glance of granite peaks afloat like icebergs in the air.

I think when I see this that I turn back, do not go
Beyond the road, across the lake and up those leaden
Scarps where motion seems asleep. Simply, this is not so.
In the bonfire that is ever melting the snow maiden
I am ascending, growing diadems of frost, turning into snow.

Extinct Lions

Where lions are extinct you will see some afternoon—
Some lion's afternoon, that is—the golden web
Of the lion's face smiling at you from an ordinary lane.
You will watch him stretch the lazy fluting of his ribs
And soar into a wall of leaves. You may not see him again.

Is it true that the lion stood like an ember in your eyes?
Or that years ago the last lion died toothless in his lair
Beyond back valleys where his skeleton still lies
Half clasped in loam, half clasping loam in the bare
And loveless bones? You ask this, yet would you tease

The savage body forth unless with a severed will
You were thinking of the time you will break through the wall

Of leaves and into forests where extinct lions prowl,
Even as you mark time with the somnolent guile
Of passenger pigeons, cooing of the sangreal?

SANFORD EDELSTEIN:

Stand Where You Are

Who is there to stop us to tell
us "Stand where you are" at
the appropriate moment
There
is more than one law there must
be more than one law a sliding
pond of cream for the flies to
play on between the pitcher and
the cup
Who is there to stop
us the pause must be unexpected
awkward abrupt
For the bread
in our hands will remain unbroken
the hunger (in our hands) must
wither and thirst
What is the
law of the three minute egg the
stand where you are of burning the
toast
This pause (the law
is a pause a hyphen a regret)
will kiss the wife good morning
forever and the husband will
remember to remember and forget

VERNON YOUNG:

Fugue of Faces:

A Danish Film and Some Photographs

Those of us for whom the written word is after all the sustaining expression to which we turn for statements of the imaginative and intellectual life must deplore the contemporary abandonment of reading in favor of those short cuts to culture which are actually endless detours: the picture magazine (see, look and live!), television and the movie. For a film critic, this is an especially troublesome acknowledgement, since his function is precisely to discover and relate in motion picture art those concerns which are basic to all the expressive arts. If he is honest, he will admit that instances of a film, in its own aesthetic terms, supplying the spectator with an experience equal in serious definition and in style to the arts with which it is contemporary, are distressingly rare. Carl-Theodore Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc,* a silent movie (this, one hour after you've watched it, seems hard to believe), is one of those instances; it forces our consent to the proposition that *to see* is as fruitful as *to know,* when the object of our seeing has been invested with the form that inspires knowledge. Knowledge, of the poetic order, let us say.

Ideally the cinema, like painting in this respect, is not a substitute for verbal revelation. It is an art with its own responsibilities and its own means for extracting, as in the Dreyer film, the sum of tragedy from a unified visual experience. It is in the highest sense an illiterate art. The least impressive films are often those that affect literacy. These may entertain; they may flatter the pretensions of the word-snob; they accomplish nothing: nothing that the theater can't accomplish. They attract the eye without opening it and if they are "sound" films they assail the ear without attuning it. The pure film constitutes a world of feeling before which, as audience, our senses are sharpened and our minds stimulated as they would be in scrutinizing great plastic art or in apprehending the ideas of a critic or novelist. The relative immediacy of even an exceptional motion picture is deceptive. Easy enough, in many cases, to follow the visual story line, but extraordinarily difficult for most people to

recognize the selective and complex means by which a sequence of photographs, moving forward in time as variously as water or as music, has become the instrument of a moral imagination. *The Passion of Joan of Arc,* made by a Dane with French actors in 1928, narrated almost entirely in closeup, vindicates the cinematic ideal.

Not the least remarkable feature of this film is the daring curve that Dreyer took—backward, so to speak—in the direction of the manipulated still, and away from the more eclectic methods of the greatest among his contemporaries, such as Epstein, Murnau, Ruttman and Eisenstein (though one does wonder whether his sharpest point of departure mightn't have been conceived after studying the mesmeric Odessa Steps sequence in *Potemkin).* Especially during the first long inquisition passage, his method is deliberately *successive,* rather than fluid or percussive. In the process of fashioning a film which to this day has few equals in uniqueness of conception (or in depth of feeling), Dreyer risked sacrificing the quintessence of cinema: interfluent motion. He took the risk and made a masterwork, incomparable and inimitable: a play (in the fugal sense) of photos—a *photoplay* (What a pity the term has been otherwise appropriated!). And the austerity of its means is the controlling factor of its greatness. Cutting from closeup to closeup was already, in 1928, one of the accepted ellipses of dramatic continuity in films, but it had simply never occurred to anyone to try sustaining the device, with but few variations, for the full length of a movie!

Dreyer opened his film *in medias res.* No preliminaries; no expotion of where and when (We all know about Joan of Domremy-la-Pucelle)! A hand thumbs a legal volume, closeup, and we are thereupon moved abruptly into the court-room (Into *a* court-room! Medieval, perhaps; the furnishings roughly denote the period, but the clothing of Joan's inquisitors is timelessly ecclesiastic, and the British soldiers wear World-War-I helmets with chin-straps!). A stool is contemptuously set down for the prisoner who from here on is the almost unrelentingly focalized object of the camera. We are placed *in* Joan's world, which consists of little else but facial reflections of her inner conviction assailed by the faces of her enemy—*men.* Importunate men: leering, skeptical, fanatical, stupid—or pitying, from a complacent distance. Under Dreyer's supervision, Rudolf Maté bears down with the camera as if he were going to devour the actors with it, stressing the mystic's unbridgeable isolation and magnifying, to the point of grossness, the fidgeting mortality of her prosecutors. An inquisitor picks his nose, scratches the bald top of

his head, or pulls at a tuft of his sweating tonsure. A monk, fuming and obscene, vituperates the prisoner in a visible shower of spittle . . . A fly settles on Joan's face . . . The "trial" becomes a fugue of faces—beleagured Maid and predisposed tribunal—subject and counter-subject circumscribed within a visual polyphony, unabating and nobly monotonous. Yet there is development, crescendo, statement and restatement. For rhythmic variety, Dreyer employed both the cut and the laterally-moving camera (i.e., *panning),* and his closeups are fabulously varied—taken full-face, profile, slantwise, overhead, from below and from the back. Sometimes a head occupies the whole frame, sometimes one side or a corner only.

As the film advances to its terrible climax—by way of the torture-chamber and preparations in the market-place for the burning of Joan —the action grows more inclusive, and the cutting-rate is faster. The world *is* larger than a courtroom or a dungeon—but not much larger —ringed by walls, guards, moats, stern towers and the machinery of execution. But there *are* people in it besides inquisitors; ordinary people, curious, frightened, obdurate, wanting (perhaps) to understand, to sympathize, to feel, above all to believe. The sky is like a steel helmet, yet there is room in it for birds to fly, unimpeded, from the prison to the church. The gravedigger shovels up a skull. A flower blooms. In the crowd a baby feeds at the breast, gulping on plenitude, then turns to stare at the doomed woman with neuter eyes that offer no solace from the comfortable world of its innocence. The birds fly over, unrestricted by chains or by self-imposed fictions of the spirit which are none the less all Joan knows of truth. The impossible doubt invades her. If *no one* shares her conviction, could she not be mistaken? She has but to declare that there were no visions, no visitations, that there can be nothing beyond the touch, the smell, the look, the accustomed relationship of substances in space . . . She recants, eager to repossess the natural world. But this alternative is denied her; instead she is condemned to imprisonment and returned to her cell where her already manwise hair is shaved off to the bone. The people celebrate with a carnival. One man shouts "Long live Joan!" and he is pitched into the moat. In the dungeon the sight of her shorn locks swept up like wood-shavings is the final affront that restores Joan to the sanity of her insanity. Her expression plainly tells that if she has traversed so far the road of the denatured she must go all the way. In revulsion and exaltation she reaffirms her visions, and the faces swing again like pendulums . . . They rush her to her death.

Once more the daylight and the sky—and a freer-ranging camera. Life at the decisive moment is more than a pinpoint of solitude and persecution. It includes protest from anonymous faces in the crowd, combat, defense, and suppression with iron knouts. And a pile of faggots. The birds take their flight . . . For refusing to say "Yes," one human being—a great fool? a divine? a mortal sick unto hallucination?—is to be roasted alive in a small cramped space of the monstrous earth by a corps of armored bullies who are breaking like straws the bones of the pitiful few who would deliver her. (Where else have we seen this spearhead of time on a shield of space? Isn't it in Brueghel's "Massacre of the Innocents"—the tight phalanx of power, the frantic cluster of villagers on a frozen earth with no conceivable hope of rescue under a steel-plated sky?) Joan does not cry out but her head falls forward. Obscured by smoke she is no longer a face, a profile, a closeup, a note sounding. She is a silhouette, a shadow of Man. Now she no longer has even the sensation of being alone.

The remnants of the resisting crowd are pushed back and struck down, as the soldiers retreat over the drawbridge to the tower. The bridge is raised. The people kneel on the far side, lamenting . . . The fugue is resolved.

The Passion of Joan of Arc is one film among probably less than a dozen of which it can be said that it adds deeply to the sum of one's experience. It exposes the nerve-root of a spiritual denouement which Bernard Shaw's play, *St. Joan,* for all its complex of ecclesiastical and political forces, never glimpsed. The historical ramifications that contributed to the prestige of Shaw's drama were precisely what Dreyer put aside; in so doing he met his subject literally face to face. Strangely, it has bothered not a few critics (I believe Iris Barry was the first in this line of disparagement) that Dreyer's Joan is not *in* history, that she is a beleagured face merely, without social attachments or precedent dimension. Such paltry objections to Dreyer's artistic ruthlessness should be dismissed with a high hand. As a matter for the record it might be pointed out that details of the trial itself were researched from original documents, and it is difficult to imagine how a crisis in the remote past could be recreated more concretely or with a more austere selection of data than this one. But personality is beyond the reach of documents. We don't (or shouldn't) give a hang whether this *is* the Joan of history (whoever that may be). Maria Falconetti impersonated her as one distinctly "possessed."

Further than this we may construe as we please. The absolute social context is irreclaimable. Jeanne D'Arc does not historically exist—no more than Jesus or Cleopatra or Napoleon or, very soon, Gandhi. She belongs to imagination, not history; she is a figment. In Carl Dreyer's movie she is simply a subject born of metaphysical drives and temperamental probabilities . . . It is always too late to know *the truth;* it is forever possible to experience that truth which it is the overbearing privilege of art to enact for us.

By a coincidence providential for the delight of The Comparative Eye, Dreyer's curious and superlative film was revived at the Museum of Modern Art simultaneously with the opening of Edward Steichen's photographic exhibit, "The Family of Man" (now on world tour and reproduced in book form). In this compelling association, the reciprocal values of still and cinema photography were given prominence and vitally enhanced, the more so as the two media seemed bent on exchanging identities: the photographs all but conveying motion, the film so concentrated on a single cinematic element as to appear relatively static. On one hand, an aggregate of separate moments coerced into vivid succession; on the other a succession crystallized into an anguished moment.

Insofar as the photographs had for their theme, Man in Crisis—and this was the overall effect they gave, even though predications less critical were on view—their impact was a consequence of drama suspended, of a challenge to one's inferences and one's curiosity . . . A mud-spattered war infant, scarcely beyond the age of toddle, awaiting, with no visible concern, sequels unpredictable to his insensate misery. (Where? Anywhere!) . . . A small neat boy going tranquilly down steps to school in a city of rubble . . . A girl tied to a tree, caught in a twist of fear that she may be the victim in a game that has gone too far . . . A pair of lovers embracing goodbye on a railway platform, cornered by the inexorable (and Ernst Haas) in a composition any cinematographer would applaud . . . Youth: on the make, on the prowl, on the beach—on the run . . . Old men on farms with hopeless eyes. Old (before their time) rural women with calculating eyes . . . The traceries of time and of something more than time in the faces of the late Werner Bischof's Indian women ("Do these bones live?") . . . Cartier-Bresson's four sibylline figures invoking Brahma . . . And one of the most powerful emblems of human protest ever captured by a roving camera: Anna Riwkin-Brick's Israelite Cassandra,

with accusing arm raised high, fingers spread—an avatar of outrage.

These are achieved photographs. Also, they are fragments for a cinema. Our response to them is unstinting, beyond the pull of identification, because the *motion picture,* more than any single aesthetic agency, has trained us to appreciate the still moment that isn't still, the "artistic shot": artistic exactly when it returns life to us stripped of the accidentals that would otherwise vitiate the purity of its emotional appeal, whether the appeal is of hunger, physical grace, despair or of one of the terrible ultimate things. When photography has reached the limit of its dramatizing resources so that you wait spellbound for something further to ensue within the single print: for the Japanese lad to swallow the snowflake; for the hands in stop-motion to finish threading the bolt; for the Peruvian Indian boy either to sound a note from his flute or put it aside and elaborate the charm of his smile while he talks to you—when it has reached this brink of sentience, you may well feel that it has already exceeded its own powers and entered, ironically, a limbo of the incongruous. However persuasively it may enlist our humanity, the documentary photograph is bound to desert one's kinetic anticipation; born of art it yet remains umbilical to life, crying out for its gesture to be developed or terminated, for its form to be depersonalized altogether or extended in space-time. By its assumption of mobility it is condemned to supersession by the motion picture.

Under the immediate spell of *The Passion of Joan of Arc,* one recognized that the force of Steichen's collection was largely the result of derivations. The artful arrangement, topical and biographical, involved the several photos in a *cinematic* chronology; the quotations from world literature edited their universality. In a rush of sweeping ingratitude it was possible to regard the exhibit as synthetic and unnecessarily multiple, since Mlle. Falconetti's superb art (in her first and only screen role) had already identified these fugitive notations of the human drama—these and others, past and to come—sustaining in a unified ordeal by closeup all the times and places where men, women and children have hoped, feared, defied and been defeated. The Joan of Falconetti and Dreyer is Ishimoto's girl tied to the tree, beginning to exchange apprehension for terror. She is the psychotic, dejected and self-embraced under a towering blank wall, locked forever in the extremity of a riven ego. She is Ernst Haas's pair of lovers overtaken by time. She is the anger in the bones of all who, like the gnarled Israelite woman, raise a hand in rebellion.

J. T. BEATY:

Riddles

Recently I have been having coffee every morning with six or seven engineers and draughtsmen from the P. C. Heine Company. A frequent but not regular member of the group is a Mr Wallace, whom the others seem to have known for several years, an artist whose studio is not far from here. Mr Wallace is a short round man with an incongruously long sad face who affects gentility in dress, manners, and accent. Often he is the butt of their jokes, and generally he is treated with boisterous abuse or mock seriousness, though they privately assure me he is thought very highly of both here and in New York as a portrait painter. Much in him and in his position in the group puzzles me.

Just this morning, for example, we had been sitting over our coffee for about ten minutes when we saw him walking past the huge plate-glass window of the coffee-shop, his homburg at a rakish angle, his walking-stick flipping straight out before him and snapping to heel with a silent *tip*. When he came through the glass door from the blazing sidewalk into the blue glare of the coffee-shop they greeted him as usual with catcalls, groans, and scraping of chairs. He took off his hat, pressed it to his heart, and showed the top of his graying head in a deep reverential bow.

"Gentlemen," he said.

Someone ceremoniously drew up a chrome and plastic chair for him. Without saying a word he sat down on the very edge of the chair, crossed his short puffed hands over the head of his walking-stick, and pursed his lips.

"There goes our coffee hour," one of them said.

"Might as well go back to work," another said, pushing his chair away from the table.

They spoke of him as if he were not there. Indeed, he apparently did not hear them, his eyes seeming to appraise the pastel walls. But his neck muscles were tensed as if straining to keep his head squarely facing the men at the table.

"We don't mind his conversation too much," one of them said, "but when he gets started with those stories . . ."

"Christ, not those!"

He had been expecting the invitation. His eyes jerked back to the circle of red faces. "Gentlemen," he said, "Dr Cabell assures me I have but one story. It seems more, he says, because I change it constantly."

He spoke softly and precisely in an accent part pseudo-Oxfordian, part Southern, part effeminate. He waited.

"Not the Hungarian model in Paris," they said.

"Not breaking the arms off the statue in Rome," they said.

The waitress brought his coffee. He stirred it briskly, little finger extended, took a cautious sip, started back as if burned, placed the cup and saucer back on the table, and sank back in his chair, looking around at the bright faces and blinking quickly as he faced the sun-flooded window.

He waited until the insults reached some predetermined number and intensity, leaned back contemplatively, and chose from among the numerous requests. He held up his hand and, the rest silent and expectant, began a story about an art class he had taught in Philadelphia, telling the story in precise, clipped sentences which disintegrated as he went along, broad "a's" and dropped "r's" appearing and disappearing like the backs of porpoises as he got deeper and deeper into his story.

"It was many years ago," he began. "I had just returned from my second trip abroad. I was short of funds and was renewing my credit by teaching a life-class at the Pennsylvania Academy. Human figger, you know. That day the model was a truly red-haired young lady. Not simply a red-head, you know.

"Ah, how I still remember her, gentlemen"—he kissed the tips of his fingers—"a certain Miss McCoy." He paused and looked silently and at length at each face in turn. "I shall, gentlemen, refrain from making any obvious remarks concerning the young lady's name."

He stared at the red face directly across from him until he saw it overflow with recognition. While they laughed and slapped each other on the back, he sat looking out the window as if fascinated by the darting reflections of the sunlight on the chrome of the passing cars.

"On this particular day," he said when they had subsided, "a new student arrived. I watched him set up his materials, and, since he seemed to know what he was about, I let him alone. 'Let him get settled,' I said to myself. 'Don't rush him.' So I did not go near him for at least an hour and a hahf. He was busy working the entire time. Finally, I walked up behind him to see what he had accomplished and perhaps to offer some suggestions. I looked over his shoulder . . ."

He paused, smacked his lips in disapproval, and moved the head of his walking-stick about the circle of faces to rivet the attention of each one. "Gentlemen, what I saw flabbergasted me."

He knitted his brows and began to act out the conversation. "'I say, old man,' I said to him, 'the proper way to draw the human figger is like so'"—Wallace made swift and delicate motions in the air—"'center line, head oval, leg, etcetera. But here *you* are, sir,' I said to him, 'after an hour and a hahf, and all you have drawn—in painstaking and infinite detail it is true—but all you have drawn is one small triangle of that figgah representing an area not six inches across.'

"And there it was gentlemen—like a flaming torch upon an altar," Wallace said.

"A flaming torch," he repeated. "'How do you explain that, sir?' I asked him.

"'Well, you see, sir,' he answered with neither embarrassment nor hesitation, 'to tell you the truth, sir, that's all I'm interested in.'"

Wallace leaned forward and took another sip of coffee while they guffawed and slapped each other on the back. Soon they were silent except for an occasional dry giggle. Some wiped their eyes. Then they remembered.

"When did you change that one?" they said.

"You know I never . . ." he said.

"You must have," they said. "We recognize the student, but come on, who really was the instructor?"

They kept it up. Wallace rolled about in his chair from one haunch to the other, leaned first one hand, then the other, then both hands on his walking-stick, laughed, blushed, made half-hearted attempts to deny the role they cast him in. Their jokes grew coarser and more insulting. Again it seemed enough.

"But I say," he said, "I'm not the only one to change stories, you know. I remember a clahss once. I was lecturing on Egyptian art —excavations, and all that, you know. I told them distinctly, distinctly, mind, about that British lord, Lord . . . What *was* his name?"

No one knew.

"Well, 'tany rate, he uncovered King Tut, you remember. The body was marvellously preserved. He was only sixteen, you know, Tut was, when he died. Then, in quite another lecture in the same course, I told them of the Frenchman who found the Rosetta Stone. What was *his* name? Champignon, or something like that."

"That's a mushroom," somebody said.

"Quite right," he said, "a mushroom. But it was something like that, you know. Well, 'tany rate, on the final examination I asked some sort of question about archaeological discoveries in Egypt. One young man informed me that when that Lord So-and-so opened King Tut's tomb the king was found clutching the Rosetta Stone."

"You see, gentlemen," he said triumphantly, "I am not the only one who takes occasional liberties with detail in order to make a more perfect, artistic story."

This anecdote was not so successful, but it was followed by the same kind of bantering, which soon solidified around the question of how Wallace would change the King Tut story in years to come.

"Soon he'll personify it," they said, "and Tut will be found clutching a certain Rosetta Stone."

"Yes," they said, "and of Miss Stone very little will have been left, though Tut was perfectly preserved."

"Very little," they said. "In fact, only a small triangle not more than six inches across."

"Like a flaming torch upon an altar," they said.

They continued to elaborate on the stories but soon the results became simply crude or flat. They no longer even referred to Wallace or to his part in the anecdotes. He sat for a few minutes with his hands folded over the head of his walking-stick looking about at the walls. Then, while their elaborations continued, he got up and walked swiftly through the door onto the sun-drenched sidewalk. The coffee circle soon broke up.

Before going back to work I strolled down by the river thinking of Wallace and of how difficult it is to discover feelings and attitudes. He could not be ignorant of the derision in their tone of amused acceptance of him, but he neither objected nor disregarded it. He actually invited the derision. What compelled him to behave that way? Was he really an accomplished artist? If so, why did he court the favor of those red-faced men? And how about their attitude? Why did they hasten to tell me how well thought of he was? Was he a symbol to them? Did they feel that in knowing him, in insulting him, in being superior to him, they confirmed their superiority over a whole continent of experience they knew nothing of? Or was I to blame? Was this just good fellowship, friendly horse-play? Was I supplying the derision, the undertones, the seriousness?

But as I stood and looked out over the river, out over the tiny waves winking in the bright sunlight, these questions melted into

the memory of the stories he had told, of Egypt and King Tutankhamen, and therefore, of course, of my grandfather.

My maternal grandfather died at the very dawn of my memory, and in that weak and early light his image is perhaps shadowy and distorted. Much of what I think I remember of him is probably based on pictures of him I have seen since and anecdotes about him told me by my mother. Tall, with a white moustache and Van Dyke, he resembled those royal cousins, Czar Nicholas, Kaiser Wilhelm, and King George V. His back was straight, though he must have been nearly seventy when I was born and though he had spent most of those years stooped over, sewing a lady's coat or dress. When I was born he had a little shop on the ground floor front of a three-story, marble-stepped house in East Baltimore. I remember the shop and the house, though I was only six when my grandfather died and my grandmother moved away. I seem to recall some of the details that surrounded his death, though these memories may not be matters of fact. I believe my mother was sitting up with him when he died. I believe I stayed in the house for two or three days either just before or just after he died. Either his sickness or his death frightened me. I remember that in one of the corners of the room in which I slept there was a thick pipe with a large, strange valve of some sort that assumed the shape of a man or a monster when the lights were out and I could see only by the gas street-lamps outside my window.

My grandfather was a silent man. I do not remember ever having heard him speak. He rarely spoke, my mother tells me, to any of his own children; perhaps he did not even speak to his wife. Every one in the family was amazed that, when my father was courting my mother despite my grandmother's disapproval, the old man spoke to him. My uncles still tell me from time to time that my grandfather spoke more to my father in four months than he did to all six of them in all their lives.

Every lunchtime during their school days, my mother, the youngest in the family, and Ed, the youngest son, would go into the shop in the front of the house and sit on the dark mahogany bench against the rear wall, intoning alternately and then together, "Pa-a-a gi' me a cent."

He would sit facing the large window through which came the weak winter sunlight, peering down at a dress or coat on his lap with his near-sighted eyes, his back to them, apparently paying no attention. They would keep up the chant for five minutes, for fifteen

minutes, a half-hour. Then, at the very last minute, when they just had time to stop in the candy-store, snatch a candy each and dash to school, just at this moment, he would take out his little purse, peer closely into it, fumble out two pennies—which he always had—and, without turning around, would throw them one at a time behind him on the floor.

"There!" he would say—his first word—and, "There!" his last.

A few years after this practice had ceased my mother went into the shop to talk to him. "Pa," she said, "I need a dress. Could you make me a dress?"

"A dress? What for?" he said, not looking up.

"For graduation, Pa."

"Graduation?" He shook his head. "What are you graduating from?"

"High school," she said.

"High school!" he said, looking up at her over his glasses. "Tell me, Ruthie," he said to her, "how old are you now?"

Then, a few years later still, just before my mother was married —and perhaps because my father talked with him, perhaps for some other reason—he secretly made my mother a dress.

He was already old then, and his eyesight had been worsening for some time. He was no longer working regularly but would sit in the kitchen by the stove drinking tea, or, both hands resting on the oilcloth that covered the round kitchen table, would simply stare off into space or into time or into himself. Occasionally he would go into the shop and sit at his work table staring out onto the street through the dark and dirty window. Sometimes he picked up a piece of work and went through the motions of sewing; therefore no one suspected, when he stayed in the shop during those weeks, that he was preparing a surprise for my mother.

It was about that time that the tomb of King Tutankhamen was opened, and the world was throbbing with the news. No war to write about, radios just beginning to appear in the middle-class home, Coolidge in his heaven almost as silent as my grandfather, all wars over and progress and riches mocking the self-pitying lost generation, this discovery seemed to be one more piece fitted into the universal jigsaw puzzle that man was soon to complete. A pyramid today; tomorrow the riddle of the Sphinx. Everything was Tut. And among the countless products manufactured which spread his fame was a

beautiful silk cloth upon which was printed a repeated design of pyramids half in sunlight and half in shadow. It was from this cloth that my grandfather was making the dress.

One morning he called my mother into the shop. It was unusual to be addressed by her father, still more unusual to be asked into the shop. She said she hoped there was nothing wrong. He assured her that there was nothing wrong. He was silent for a few moments. She could tell nothing from his face; his blue eyes were magnified unnaturally by his new thick glasses, but they were, as usual, as expressionless as sapphires.

"There!" he said, picking up a tissue-paper-wrapped package from the work table, thrusting it into her hands and turning away. "Try it on."

She went behind the dressing-screen and came out in her new dress, sick with gratitude, tenderness, and pity.

"You like it?" he said.

"Papa," she said, "it's beautiful, simply beautiful," and she ran to him crying.

He pushed her away gently, shaking his head no. "There," he said, as if throwing the penny to her, "take it off and put it away. There!" He waved his hand as if to banish her.

She put it away. Often she would take it out and feel the material and look at the careful, beautiful workmanship, each stitch a kiss he had not given her, a word he had not spoken to her. She would put it on and go down to the kitchen or the shop before she went out and say, "See, Papa, how do you like the way I look in my new dress?"

He would not look up but would wave his banishing hand at her very slowly. Then she would sneak upstairs, take the dress off, and put it away carefully in the tissue-paper. She did that the night she eloped with my father.

"I'm glad he never knew," she told me. "His eyes got worse and worse toward the end. He never knew the pyramids were upside down."

I stood looking out over the river. Though I squinted in the bright sunlight and peered very hard, I could not tell which way the tiny waves were flowing. I wondered what Wallace meant and was he or was he not a fool, and what my grandfather meant, sitting silently in the dark kitchen or gray shop. And I thought of King

Tutankhamen and how he would now forever stand in memory half in sunlight, half in shadow, like the design of the pyramids on the silk that I had never seen.

ARTHUR CARSON:

Winter, the Waiter

During the beginning we watched and saw the end
become soft and touchable and we knew
we could not escape.
Then, as we became confused, we knew
there was no beginning and probably no end,
and the girl brought us a basket of duck eggs.
We could not find our way around
but when we called the waiter, he trapped us,
and we could suddenly see ourselves there
with our heads tilted at the music
and our glinting sins like daggers at our sides
and all our forgotten, long-forgotten, dead around us,
and all of it was like a bright flower
in a frosted morning,
bursting.

Ananke

We have been touched by rivers
So that we turn in their directions
And flow into the sea.
We have been turned by rivers and winds
And go like electric birds, magnetized
Along invisible wires.
We sink deep into the sea
Like a rock upon which a round-eyed fish is painted.

RUDOLPH PELLINAT:

The River

Here is a little boy went walking in the woods
And saw the woods become a river:
    And the river went flowing—

        The river became a pool,
        The pool became an owl:

    And the owl went whooing—
Here is a black owl went winging in the woods
And flew into a darkness cave:

        The cave became a pool,
        The pool became a river:

    And the river went flowing—
Here is a little boy went drowning in the woods
And flew into a darkness cave.

BYRON VAZAKAS:

Whitman under the Aegis of Boston

I thought of Emerson tonight as I
hiked through the Common down from Beacon Hill
as though a classic route somehow shook all
the classic dust clean from my feet. Elms gleamed.
Glass flashed. And sunset dialed the Bulfinch bows.
We'd argued, as we walked, agreeably.
But now it's Autumn. Then cold iced the eaves.
It's Autumn, yes. But cold and death are one.
And democratic vistas stiffen here
until I wonder if this place or I
am alien. I baited Emerson.
I teased him that acceptance was this cold
that froze the blood into its tyranny;
and like this rigid season would creep back

from older censorships to witch the flow
of love and knowledge, moral anarchists.
He growled, but granted that enforcement led
the transcendental to theocracy.
Still arguing, we crossed the street, and had
a damned good steak at the American.

BERNICE SLOTE:

Garden, with Jane

Jane (call her Janus) the second-prize girl
(So she won, so she lost)—Jane I say came forth
By candlemas moon and counted her prayers,
One two three. And almost finished the birth

Of a next one, yet not quite. All three
Were prayers the saints had bled for her, given in fee
For Jane to savor. The last was her own.
She wept then . . . over the lover not so tall

As the woman he walks with . . . over the hand
That clicks the alarm off early, early. Wept
For donkeys and mushrooms . . . nobody's prayers . . .
And the red red apple hanging ready to fall.

Perce

Like a bobbin, body flickers
Land to sea, wound on spiced
Interior pines, the flowered field
And valley of Gaspé; wound
On deep Arthurian mist the sea
Recovers, on titan rocks that rise
Beyond the port, and tidal waste
Of northern waters billowing.

Feet cling to the stony edge of day
Until the boat skims out to where
In tiers the gulls clamor the rock,
And farther over the whitening roll.

But even Ishmael turned to the green
Land, knew the insular
Tahiti where the center holds.
And so the boat rings back to home.

The bobbin shuttles on the point
Percé. Once more the Frenchman smiles
And leads her to the grassy hill:
Raspberries, blueberries, here in the sun.
His eyes tangle the skein of light
And thread her in, even the while
She whirls to seaward, fugitive.
Halifax there, and Newfoundland,
Over the rim of the last red rock.

CONTRIBUTORS

J. T. BEATY teaches at V.M.I. "Riddles" is his first published story.

KENNETH BURKE'S *Book of Moments, Poems 1915-1954* was recently issued by Hermes Publications.

ARTHUR CARSON, a student at Berkeley, has appeared in *Poetry, Perspective,* etc.

THOMAS H. CARTER, formerly the editor of *Shenandoah,* lives in Nashville.

SANFORD EDELSTEIN'S poetry is being featured in New Ventures' new pamphlet series.

YVAN GOLL'S "John Landless" poems, translated by several American writers, will be collected in 1956 in a Beechurst Press volume supervised by his widow, Claire Goll.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN'S *The Armed Vision* has just been reprinted by Vintage Books.

RUDOLPH PELLINAT is a young Chicago writer. This is his first published poem.

J. F. POWERS is soon to publish his second story collection, *The Presence of Grace.*

BERNICE SLOTE, of Lincoln, Neb., has contributed to many poetry magazines.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH, best known as a poet, is at work on a novel, *The Straw Market.*

RADCLIFFE SQUIRES, author of *Where the Compass Spins,* teaches at Michigan.

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WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' newest book of poems, *Journey to Love,* is just out.

VERNON YOUNG, film critic for *Arts Digest,* is now living in New York City.

KENNETH BURKE:
The Criticism of Criticism

R. P. BLACKMUR: *The Lion and the Honeycomb; Essays in Solicitude and Critique.* Harcourt, Brace.

Mr. Blackmur is first of all a technical critic, an analyst of texts, (a "New Critic"), one of the best we have. Second, he makes social observations that impart an air of distinction to the life of books (an accomplishment especially welcome to any of us who may hope that books of our own may somehow some day make us, if not distinguished, then at least distinguishable). Third, he sometimes puts forth statements of policy, quasi-diplomatic releases designed to serve some turn in the rhetoric, or politics, of the republic of letters.

Not that these emphases are always confined to separate essays. Sometimes they are relatively pure, sometimes interwoven. And even in discussion of one particular author, his concerns are regularly on the side of criticism in general (as with his "radical allegiance to language," if we may apply to him a formula that he applies to T. S. Eliot). Hence, the title, "the criticism of criticism," for this review of his new book.

From the standpoint of readers especially interested in the resources and embarrassments of words, I think that one of the most fertile things this critic, or any critic, ever did in technical criticism was his analysis of the word "flower" as used in E. E. Cummings. In this essay (the first in his first collection of critical essays, *The Double Agent)* Mr. Blackmur was working at rock bottom —and one might adopt or adapt his observations without necessarily sharing his attitude or putting his remarks to the same use.

The present collection does not reprint this. (However, it was reprinted in his third volume of criticism, *Language as Gesture.)* But another early essay, a masterly piece of characterization, "The Critical Prefaces of Henry James," does reappear. Perhaps the two best pieces of characterization in the present collection are another essay on Henry James, and an attempt to give the gist of Eliot's criticism, "In the Hope of Straightening Things Out."

The new James essay gravitates about problems of form along lines in keeping with Aristotle's Poetics. However, despite the Jamesian slogan, "Dramatise it!" (a slogan that led James dramatistically to view his problems primarily in terms of "act," "agent," and "scene") there are notable differences between the application of this formula to drama proper and its extension to problems of the novel. Mr. Blackmur does not attempt as thoroughly or systematically as critics like Ronald Crane or Elder Olson might, to differentiate between the principles of drama and those of the novel. Possibly he is deterred somewhat by his pudency as regards what he calls "methodology." But in any case, his close looks at the texts he is discussing make everything he says worth watching here, and do expertly follow the leads of Aristotle's method, in considering the Jamesian novel primarily from the standpoint of its nature as a literary species.

Shopping about among the seventeen pieces here assembled, and trying to survey as fairly as possible in a brief space the mere contents of the book, let us first give tidings of the pieces not already mentioned or not to be discussed later:

"The Politics of Human Power" is a review of Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*. Here Mr. Blackmur subscribes to "the tory anarchy which is just the other side of liberalism." He holds that "The true business of literature, as of all intellect, critical or creative, is to remind the powers that be, simple and corrupt as they are, of the turbulence they have to control. There is a disorder vital to the individual which is fatal to society."

"The Artist as Hero" considers such "expressionistic" heroes as those in Dostoevski, Joyce, Gide, Mann's *Dr. Faustus*—for "the place where morals hit hardest on the arts is in the center, where the hero is."

"The Economy of the American Writer" is built about the thought that "the theory of a cultural market does not work."

"The American Literary Expatriate" is an exceptionally good survey of variations in the type, including the species that "stayed at home and practiced ingrown expatriation." The essay includes many astute references to the social and economic elements that figured in the phenomenon. It is indebted to Henry James at one end and to Mr. Malcolm Cowley at the other, though only James gets quoted.

"The Expense of Greatness" is an efficient digest giving us the gist of Henry Adams. "I want to regard him as he often chose to regard himself, as a representative example of education: but education pushed to the point of failure as contrasted with ordinary education which stops at the formula of success." For: "Success is not the propitious term for education unless the lesson wanted is futile. Education has no term and if arrested at all is only arrested by impassable failure." This is an early essay (1936), and perhaps Mr. Blackmur himself would be willing to grant that it could profit by greater stress upon Adams' use of the dialectic pair, "multiplicity" and "unity," with the colonies of terms that come to cluster about these poles.

"The Everlasting Effort" treats of T. E. Lawrence and his "problem of the obsessed sensibility." ("We say that Dante was a master of disgust; lacking St. Thomas and Aristotle, Lawrence is a master of disgorgement.")

"The Craft of Herman Melville" discusses Melville's "radical inability to master a technique—that of the novel—radically foreign to his sensibility."

"Humanism and Symbolic Imagination" builds up Mr. Blackmur's notion of the "symbolic imagination" by contrast with the doctrines of Irving Babbitt, who "was a praiser of gone times because he had none of his own." This look back at Babbitt's legislating brings the author close to vehemence, as when he says of Babbitt: "In almost the exact measure that he secures assent to his main position he rouses antipathy by the blows—blind, brutal, and arrogant—which he strikes from it." However, I just happen to have been reading a paper, "Irving Babbitt and Benedetto Croce," by Folke Leander; and I was here reminded that, for all the shortcomings of Babbitt when on the relation between poetry and ethics, his stress upon the "inner check" does serve to bring out the essentially *negative* aspect of "conscience." But there's no denying that, by the rhetorical and/or dialectical device of defining the idea of the "symbolic imagination" by antithesis to Babbitt, Mr. Blackmur at least makes us feel very forcefully what such imagination is *not*.

In "Notes on Four Categories in Criticism," these four divisions are proposed: (1) "superficial techniques," such as metre, plot, stanza, rhyme, alliteration; (2) "linguistic technique," such as images, tropes, and idiom, which is "speech

breathing with perception"; (3) "the ulterior technique of the imagination," by which is apparently meant the elements of cultural background that may be necessary to an understanding of a work, elements that can be lost and that can be restored somewhat by historical criticism, conventions that served as authority even when rejected (what Malinowski might have called the "context of situation," or Carl Becker the "climate of opinion" that may be lost insofar as it is merely implied in a given work); (4) the "symbolic imagination," by which an "image" becomes a "symbol." The previously-mentioned negative approach to the "symbolic imagination" is here matched by a very good positive example, thus:

> In *Madame Bovary* the widowed doctor reaches the desire to marry Emma when he sees her tip her head back and insert her tongue into a cordial glass: she is given as nubile, ripe, romantic, and ready. In this image—this touch of the actual—are present, by authority, the institutions, conventions, and fictional formulas that have to do with marriage. Flaubert knows how little he has to put in—the tongue in the glass—and how much he can leave out—all the human needs that are conveyed in marriage . . .

And later, with a just stress upon the element of anticipation in form, he says:

> In *Madame Bovary* is it not Flaubert's *anticipation* of Emma's collapse exactly what leads to it and makes it inevitable? There was nothing in the situation that might not have been changed by a single different step; but then the satisfaction of the anticipation would have been lost and the book would have fallen apart. Is it not perhaps the actuality of that anticipation that craves reality? . . . As she collapses she becomes a symbol satisfying Flaubert's anticipation and much more, articulating in her figure and in the configuration of the novel both the anticipation of the author and the actuality of her experience.

The reference to *Flaubert's* anticipation is perhaps a bit misleading, as here quoted. It refers to the ways in which Flaubert, by his ways of anticipation, produced *a book* that shapes our anticipations as readers.

"Between the Numen and the Moha" is an ingenious refurbishment of two old dialectical favorites, variously called mind-body, spirit-matter, spirit-letter. It contains a brief anecdotal interlude (the page-long section III) that is picturesquely morbid (suggesting somewhat the sort of effect Mann sometimes gets in hospital scenes). The tenor of the chapter is indicated in the reference to "the sickness of our times, which have invented the term 'ideology' and have puerilized the term 'dialectic' "; accordingly, "If there is a destructive criticism of Mann's novels, it is that his conceptual structure is sometimes so schematic that it invades and destroys his substance." All told: "This is one of the ways the struggle between the *Numen* and the *Moha* actually takes place." Though Mr. Blackmur thought highly enough of this essay to end on it, I cannot give it the attention it thus would seem to deserve. In particular, his working of the refrain, "T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see!" seems a bit rhetorically forced. But the closing words do provide a most appealing resonant note to end on:

> Was it not the old peasant, in *War and Peace,* who cured Pierre by his nightly proverbial prayer in the garden of their prison: Let me lie down, oh God, like a stone, and wake like fresh bread? That is, between the *Numen* and the *Moha.*

"Dante's Ten Terms for the Treatment of the Treatise" is perhaps Mr. Blackmur's most forthright sally into dialectic, here on the subject of poetics, and in line with Dante's definition of poetry as a "rhetorical fiction." It is built around Dante's description of the Divine Comedy, as "poetic, fictive, descriptive, digressive, transumptive; and likewise proceeding by definition, division, proof, refutation, and setting forth of examples." Mr. Blackmur tentatively makes pairs of terms by variously matching the terms and speculating on the results. He uses this dialectic maneuvering heuristically to suggest perspectives on various literary works, as when he says: "Miranda is poetic definition; *The Alchemist* is fictive division; Proust is descriptive proof; *Joseph in Egypt* is digressive refutation; *Lear* or *Hamlet* is transumptive example." He goes on to list the remaining possible pairs, though he does not give any applications that these other sets may have suggested to him, and he does not apply the scheme elsewhere in the book.

The essay that gives the book its title is decidedly in the third of the classes I mentioned at the beginning of this review. It is a statement of policy . . . designed to serve some turn in the rhetoric, or politics, of the republic of letters. In keeping with the genius of his subtitle for the book, I assume that he would class it among his "solicitudes."

Dated 1950, it calls for a new start, beyond the "New Criticism." Asserting that the New Critics, including himself, had been too exclusively concerned with problems of rhetoric, he calls upon them to repent somewhat, not by dropping rhetoric, but by adding two other dimensions: dialectic and poetic.

I would gladly have joined in his clarion call. I'd have come shouting "Me too!" But alas, without referring to any specific treatment of dialectic in my writings, or to items of mine that I would place in the field of poetics, Mr. Blackmur says that "In Mr. Burke rhetoric always does all the work."

This severe sentence is offered also as prophecy for my subsequent work, with regard to which Mr. Blackmur says: "If we remember that one of Mr. Burke's favorite key devices is contained in the remark that language is either *symbolic* action or symbolic *action,* I think we may hazard it that rhetoric will be doing the work in the symbolic."

Part of the trouble may be due to the fact that different people draw the line between poetic and rhetoric at different places. For instance, we saw Mr. Blackmur himself quoting Dante's definition of poetry as *fictio rhetorica.* Similarly, the line of demarcation between rhetoric and dialectic wavers (as one might expect in the light of Aristotle's observation that rhetoric is the "counterpart" of dialectic). In this same essay, Mr. Blackmur states abruptly, "Dialectic has nothing to do with Hegel"—and if that's the end of Hegel, what right have others to complain? But as regards the possibility of accenting the expression "symbolic action" on either the adjective or the noun: I would consider it a dialectical fact that an expression compounded of two elements can be slanted two ways, though such a *dialectical* potentiality can be exploited for *rhetorical* purposes. For instance, if you define poetry as "an imitation of life," you have an expression that slopes two ways, since some observers can stress the nature

of the imitation, while others can stress the ways in which the imitation derives vitality from its origins in real life. And if you wanted to sum up this distinction by a shift of accent (a resource natural to language as tonal gesture) you could say that one school hears the expression as *"imitation* of life," while the other hears it as "imitation of *life."* And whereas *rhetorical* battles of the books could arise from these choices, we could look upon them as grounded in a *dialectical* condition, a duality of possibilities implicit in the compound expression itself.

Somewhere in the Shawcross edition of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* there is a similar observation, with regard to the distinction between "imagination" and "fancy." It is suggested that you might think of imagination as *"unity* in diversity" and of fancy as "unity in *diversity."* And if Mr. Blackmur, in a dialectical exercise, would permit himself to consider many possible "permutations and combinations" among ten terms of Dante's, surely this analyst of "language as *gesture"* (or *"language* as gesture"?) should allow for the possible heuristic shift of an accent as a way of revealing the elements of dialectical instability that may be concealed in a term.

Surprisingly, though the "Lion" essay calls for "the mutually related and interinanimated modes of poetic, dialectic, and rhetoric," it itself is essentially an exercise in rhetoric, built around the rhetorical use of Yeats's poem on the "Second Coming." (That is, the poem is introduced not as a theme for study as poetics, but in order that its imagery may be exploited by the essayist for rhetorical purposes, to dissuade an audience.) Yeats having vatically prophesied along Spenglerian lines that the world is in decay and that a repugnant Caesarish Rough Beast will arise, Mr. Blackmur suggests that the New (= Rhetorical) Criticism fits the sinister recipe. This Criticism he next identifies with a somewhat ungainly term, "methodology." All told, he builds up this persuasive set of equations: New Criticism = exclusive stress upon Rhetoric = "Mere anarchy . . . loosed upon the world" = "methodology."

"Methodology" *could* mean simply the systematic criticism of method. In this regard, it could be related to professional scruples on the part of a critic who paused in his criticism of others' poetry to criticize his own criticism. As so viewed, one might grant its proneness to excess, without feeling that it was to be identified with Yeats's horrendous Rough Beast, as in this essay.

However, Mr. Blackmur's treatment of it is not *exclusively* rhetorical. "Method becomes methodology," he says, "when a means becomes an end." Though this formula is often used rhetorically, it does have a grounding in dialectic. But ironically enough, any really thorough analysis of the ways in which means tend to usurp the role of ends will be good in proportion as it itself thinks along methodological lines. There is a sense, for instance, in which even the best of art could be called a transforming of means into ends (as when an artistic medium is used for its own sake rather than for some utilitarian purpose, or when a poet uses sheerly as poetic forms the rhetorical devices which an orator uses to make an audience change its mind in some controversial issue).

As part of his program, Mr. Blackmur also pleads for a greater concern with Aristotle's Poetics. To this end, he selects, for intelligent relish, certain of Aristotle's key terms, which he places succinctly and aptly. However, since he is stressing essentials, I wish he had taken the further space needed to bring out the importance of Aristotle's concern with literary works in terms of their nature as *species.* For this is the very essence of Aristotle's approach to his subject, and

it is a matter often neglected in post-Crocean criticism.

The omission has strategic bearing upon one of the definitions. I refer to Mr. Blackmur's definition of tragic catharsis as "the purging, cleansing, purifying of the *mythos* subject to *mimesis.*" That is, he here treats catharsis as a process sheerly internal to the work, quite as though, through "incidents arousing pity and fear," the poetic action of the work so "accomplished its catharsis of such emotions" that the story itself could be considered as undergoing the purge. And the loss of Aristotle's writings on poetic catharsis, along with the fact that he treated of this subject in the Poetics rather than in the Rhetoric, helps us all the more to assume that Aristotle was here discussing the symbolic purging not of the *audience,* but of the *plot* (which he variously calls the end, purpose, principle, life, and soul of tragedy).

But though I incline to share what I take to be Mr. Blackmur's feeling, that poetics should ideally treat of a work in its internality, and though I think we should aim as fully as possible at a purely internal account of "catharsis," there seems good reason to doubt that Aristotle had such purely internal reference in mind when thinking of "catharsis." For he is very much concerned with the nature of tragic pleasure. And whereas one might, for methodological reasons, legitimately object to introducing here his references to catharsis in the Politics (where the term deals with the purging of tendencies toward political unrest), surely we can make up for the loss of the section on purgation in the Poetics by citing related lines from his treatise on Music, which he classes as another kind of *mimesis* (that is, imitation, or, in my proposed heuristic translation, "symbolic action"). Here he writes:

> Music should be studied, not for the sake of one, but of many benefits, that is to say, with a view to education and purgation (the word "purgation" we use at present without explanation, but when hereafter we speak of poetry, we will treat the subject with more precision). . . . In education the most ethical modes are to be preferred, but in listening to the performances of others we may admit the modes of action and passion also. For feelings such as pity and fear, or, again, enthusiasm, exist very strongly in some souls, and have more or less influence over all. Some persons fall into a religious frenzy, whom we see as a result of the sacred melodies—when they have used the melodies that excite the soul to mystic frenzy—restored as though they had found healing and purgation. Those who are influenced by pity or fear, and every emotional nature, must have a like experience, and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotions, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted. The purgative melodies likewise give an innocent pleasure to mankind. Such are the modes and melodies in which those who perform music at the theatre should be invited to compete. But since the spectators are of two kinds—the one free and educated, and the other a vulgar crowd composed of mechanics, laborers, and the like—there ought to be contests and exhibitions instituted for the relaxation of the second class also. And the music will correspond to their mind; for as their minds are perverted from the natural state, so there are perverted modes and highly strung and unnaturally colored melodies.

Here, obviously, Aristotle is discussing catharsis, not as a "purifying" or unfolding of the melodic line, but as a response that music aroused *in an audience*. And precisely at this point he refers to his use of the term in the Poetics. A lesser reason for thinking that the formula can deal with a rhetorical consideration (the "purifying" effect that the work has *upon an audience)* is that questions of audience appeal are considered elsewhere in the Poetics (hence, are not categorically excluded). And modern works, such as George Thomson's *Aeschylus and Athens,* studying the derivation of secular tragedy from a religious ceremony, can justify us in looking for its corresponding function as a kind of *secular* "medicine," however modified, and however amply analyzable in its own right.

One other point should be mentioned as regards this titular essay. When setting up Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as another norm to be followed, Mr. Blackmur focuses on three terms: esemplastic, coadunative, and synergical. He gives a brief definition of each, in accordance with his own interpretation of them.

Since I don't know where "synergical" appears in Coleridge's works, and since Mr. Blackmur gives us no quotations from Coleridge, though he does well by it we cannot wholly share his relish in it. But it looks like a term that might be profitably scrutinized for a possible relation to the doctrine of "synergism." (There seems a chance that, whereas the theological term designates a heresy, its analogue in Coleridge might reveal interesting transformations when thus transplanted).

As regards the other terms, "esemplastic" and "coadunative," there is the opportunity for a closer look; and I think that Mr. Blackmur's definitions require a closer look; for otherwise the reader may puzzle himself in an attempt to discern a distinction where none may really exist.

"Esemplastic" he defines as: "forming, shaping, at a rhetorical level if you take rhetoric as a creative agent." And "coadunative" he defines as "having to do with the union of similar substances, at a dialectical level if you take dialectic as an aesthetic agent." He nowhere quotes from Coleridge to establish this distinction. And I greatly doubt whether he could find any quotations to back him. I think he is improvising here (perhaps in accordance with his own wisecrack elsewhere, that there is a taint of "original genius" in our critics). So far as I can make out, the terms are wholly synonymous, except that one of them is an artificial construct of Coleridge's from Greek elements, the other being the nearest equivalent from the Latin *(coadunatio* is in the big Harpers' Latin Dictionary).

Let us consider a passage from the collection of Coleridge fragments, *Anima Poetae.* Here the words seem to be used interchangeably, though one of them appears in a slightly modified form. (As has been noted in the Shawcross edition of the *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge seems to have read something into the German that is not etymologically there, but no matter.)

> How excellently the German *Einbildungskraft* expresses this prime and loftiest faculty, the power of co-adunation, the faculty that forms the many into one—*in-eins-bildung!* Eisenoplasy, or esenoplastic power, is contradistinguished from fantasy, or the mirrorment, either catoptric or metoptric—repeating simply, or by transposition—and, again, involuntary as in dreams, or by an act of the will.

Here, you will note, he specifically uses "co-adunation" to name imagination, or "the faculty that forms the many into one." But in his *Biographia Literaria,* his subtitle for chapter XIII is "On the imagination, or esemplastic power." And there is the much-quoted passage at the beginning of chapter X, where he made up the Greek form of his term "from the Greek words, *eis hen plattein,* to shape into one."

It seems to me that Mr. Blackmur is here asking his readers to use the terms in accordance with a distinction that Coleridge himself did not make. And the distinction is explained by another distinction that in itself needs to be explained. I refer to his distinction between: "esemplastic" as rhetorical "if you take rhetoric as a creative agent"; and "co-adunative" as dialectical "if you take dialectic as an aesthetic agent."*

In another essay that we would class among the statements of policy, "A Burden for Critics," Mr. Blackmur builds his position around three Latin formulae: *Omnis intellectus omniformis est; fides quaerens intellectus; corruptio optima pessima.* The second and third are slightly wrong, with corresponding errors in translation. In the case of the third, the difference is negligible. And elsewhere in the book it appears correctly. But the slight difference in the second makes for a notable difference in translation that is worth dwelling on. For it is not a mere error; rather, in the form he gave it, it reveals something essential about the dialectic pattern that seems to lie at the basis of his thinking.

Mr. Blackmur writes:

> The temptation of the Middle Ages was to identify God with either one's own knowledge of him or with one's particular form of faith. *Fides quaerens intellectus* is a motto meant to redeem that temptation; for it is faith alone that may question the intellect, as it is only the intellect that can curb faith. The very principle of balance, together with the radical precariousness of its nature, lies in the reversibility of this motto.

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* So far as I can see, the line "Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze" (in the "Eolian Harp" poem) is dealing with the same unifying effect of the imagination as this note in *Anima Poetae:*

> As when the taper's white cone of flame is seen double, till the eye moving brings them into one space and then they become one—so did the idea in my imagination coadunate with your present form soon after I first gazed upon you.

In another note Coleridge speaks of feelings being "more confused, and thereby, coadunated"—then continues: "Just as white is the very emblem of one in being the confusion of all." Coleridge attributes this unifying power of imagination to Wordsworth as a poet; and such *poetic* faculty (which, at the end of chapter XIII he calls the "secondary Imagination") is either "esemplastic" or "co-adunative," as you prefer.

The only possible distinction I can see concerns not public dictionary meanings but private poetic overtones. When Coleridge writes that *plattein* means "to shape into one," we catch a glimpse of the way in which his critical word *esemplastic* and his poetic word *plastic* (used with reference to his vision of ideal unity, in his "Eolian Harp" poem) both contain, at one remove, a word that was greatly resonant for him: the word "shape." To pick but three spots along its fatally ambiguous range: "These shapings of the unregenerate mind"; "A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!"; "My shaping spirit of Imagination." The word "coadunative" would lack the traces of "shape" that lurk in "esemplastic."

The traditional formula accredited to St. Anselm has not *intellectus* but *intellectum,* (an accusative where Mr. Blackmur puts a nominative). *Grammatically,* there is no "reversibility" in this version of the formula. It can be translated in but one direction: "faith seeking understanding." And as regards the *doctrinal* nature of the formula, St. Anselm himself happens to have explicitly discussed its singleness of direction. "Right order requires," he says, "that we believe the profundities of Christian faith, before we presume to discuss them rationally." *(Rectus ordo exigit, ut profunda Christianae fidei credamus, priusquam ea praesumamus ratione discutere.* See on Anselm in the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.)*

Emile Bréhier's history, *La Philosophie du Moyen Age,* makes it clear that the singleness of direction was re-enforced by a third stage, *intellectus* being but an intermediate step between faith and vision (or *contemplatio),* which transcends the ergotizing ways of the understanding. And in Chapter II of his *L'Esprit de la Philosophie Médiévale,* Etienne Gilson brings out the same irreversibility thus:

> *La hiérarchie traditionnelle des modes de connaissance, chez les penseurs chrétiens, est toujours la foi, l'intelligence, la vue de Dieu face à face:* "Inter fidem et speciem," *écrit saint Anselme,* "intellectum quem in hac vita capimus esse medium intelligo."

True, there is a sense in which the third member of a three-term dialectic may look like a state of "reversibility" between both members of a two-term dialectic. As regards the dialectical design of Hegel *(absit nomen!),* the "synthesis" has certain elements in common with the "thesis" and others in common with the "antithesis." And if you were compelled to state this three-term relationship in a two-term system, about the nearest you could come to it would presumably be by treating the two terms as mutually checking each other, except insofar as you might, with another accent, treat them as mutually re-enforcing each other.

We should further note that, despite the triadic nature of the thinking *behind* St. Anselm's formula, it is dyadic on its face, and has in history repeatedly gravitated towards a two-term pattern, with *fides* and *intellectus* as the two slopes, and *quaerens* as the ambiguously intermediate sloper. But our main point is that Mr. Blackmur's notion of two terms, with a relation of "reversibility" between the terms, seems typical of his own thinking. Also it seems to be the dialectical pattern underlying the first essay in his book, an essay which we turn to next.*

With his first essay, "Towards a Modus Vivendi," we face the full complexity of our problem. In the titular essay, "The Lion and the Honeycomb" (dated 1950), Mr. Blackmur had called for the subordination of rhetoric to poetic and dialectic. But in the much later essay with which his book begins, he deals

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* As regards the sheer grammar of the Latin formula, I assume that, in interpreting it as reversible, Mr. Blackmur had something of this sort in mind: The two nouns *fides* and *intellectus* were to be considered as nominatives, in apposition. The participle *quaerens* midway between them was to be thought of as capable of shifting its attachment to either one or the other of the nouns. An inspection of such dialectical resources would suggest either *fides quaerens (est) intellectus* or *fides (est) quaerens intellectus.* Or, translating generously, we might get, respectively: "a questing and/or questioning faith is intellect" and "faith is a questing and/or questioning intellect" (or, for the second: "a questing and/or questioning intellect is faith").

exclusively with a rhetorical problem, the relation between writers and audiences. It is an observant article, excellent in its way, a highly reputable contribution to that realm midway between literature and sociology that has been called the sociology of literature.

Though imaginatively written, the essay contains no elements of Poetic. Its stress is overwhelmingly upon a consideration of Rhetoric. And insofar as it is implicitly dialectical, its dialectic is that of a sociologist (dealing, as it does, with problems of "the intellectual proletariat and the technical elite"). Matters are still further complicated for this reviewer by the fact that, despite the strong rhetorical stress in the essay, I find myself obliged to maintain that in one notable respect it is not rhetorical enough!

The essay deals with the problem of the "New Illiteracy," a kind of *corruptio optimi* that "has followed the course of universal education." We here have a report (with facts and figures) of Mr. Blackmur's "reactions to peoples and politics in thirteen months of brief visits to England, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, the Lebanon, and Turkey." Its "bias" is "toward re-creating or even creating *de novo* at the cultural and intellectual level the sense of a modus vivendi."

A "new intellectual proletariat" has arisen, we are told, and the corresponding new illiteracy "represents those who have been given the tool of reading . . . without being given either the means or skill to read well or the material that ought to be read." The result is a state of affairs where "the inflammable opinion of the new illiterate is mistaken for the will of the people, so that arson becomes a chief political instrument." All countries need "a larger truly literate class; educated to the needs and purposes of the society." Such an "elite" would be an alternative to "the new intellectual proletariat," the "class of intellectually trained men and women the world over who cannot make a living in terms of their training and who cannot, because of their training, make a living otherwise with any satisfaction." (Mr. Blackmur here offers a superb variation, by the way, on the sociologist Veblen's concept of "trained incapacity.")

"The dilution of literacy, and the intrusion of the new illiteracy into higher education" lead us to "opine that we must *distrust the ability of the audience,*" whereupon "we end up inferior to the potential response of the audience." Our "distrust of the audience," resulting from "our distrust of our own reason and our own imagination," leads us to put our faith in such rhetorical resources as "psychological warfare" ("sometimes we call it advertising or aiming at the target").

Next come eight factual pages on the general state of the reading public, the sparse circulation of good magazines, etc., as he found in the course of his travels. (He says some gruesome things about the quality of the "culture" being exported from the United States. But perhaps his most startling remark came earlier: "We find the USIS in Tel Aviv competing against Russia with the Tarzan books as indicator of the American way of life and all its superiority to the Russians who came bringing Tolstoy.") Then follow eight pages built about the "maxim" that "the new illiteracy prevents a modus vivendi." Instead of an influential cultured elite, we have "an intellectual proletariat."

In the last five pages, noting that "the paying audience has, under present conditions . . . nowhere grown in relation either to population or to perform-

ance," and avowing that "the problem of audience belongs to education, both within and outside the educational systems," Mr. Blackmur ends earnestly but somewhat vaguely as regards his recommendations.

He is clear enough in his attack upon "professionalism and trades-unionism (of which it is another form)," contending that "professionalism is a form of illiteracy." But on the positive side, we are told only that "the populace must be educated to the level required for the honest and informed discovery of their will" and we should welcome anything that can "persuade" to the "multiplication and heightening of individual intelligence."

Thus, finally:

> Some people call the mode of this intelligence in action criticism. It had better be called the charity of compassionate understanding. Its aim is no less than a modus vivendi for those who must live together.

In sum, confronting "the explosions of universal education," Mr. Blackmur seems to be in line with the frequent current plea for major stress upon a general education in the humanities, as against merely vocational education or, what is worse, mere indoctrination for the efficient stimulating of desired responses. Insofar as education can help solve the problem, I imagine that most readers of this magazine and of Mr. Blackmur would agree with such a slant. I certainly do.

But here is where my embarrassment enters. For at this point I find myself required to hold that, on the basis of Mr. Blackmur's own evidence, what we need is not less attention to rhetoric, but more, though not precisely to the kind of "rhetoric" that would be most characteristic of the "New Critics." I would hold that, in the kind of education Mr. Blackmur seems to call for, the *systematic study of rhetoric* be given the high place it had in classical Athens, Rome, during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and after. (It lost its relative importance in the curriculum, I believe, only after the gradual rise of aesthetics during the nineteenth century. Then, being exiled, rhetoric found a partial home in the new "professional" disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, "semantics," and in such techniques as the analysis of public opinion.)

I was mildly scandalized once when one of our outstanding critics, writing on Aristotle as literary critic, never so much as mentioned his Rhetoric. Yet Aristotle was, first of all, a teacher of rhetoric. And until contemporary teachers of English overcome a resistance that they inherited from nineteenth-century aesthetics, their views about a general education in the humanities must continue to be quite warped. Mr. Blackmur's view that "Education is a lever, not an evangelist" has much to recommend it, but only if we make sure that education tells us a lot about the levers of evangelism. When Mr. Blackmur warns against the "arson" of a demagogue, does he not automatically pledge us to a jealous study of such arsonists' devices?

Thus when, in his titular article, he called upon contemporary critics in general and upon Ransom, Brooks, Empson, and Burke in particular, to subordinate their overwhelmingly "rhetorical" concerns, he was making a plea that was more complicated than it may have seemed. And not until now have we established the coordinates for our answer, which is:

By all means, let us *lessen* the emphasis upon "rhetoric," insofar as we mean

by rhetoric the concerns inherited simply from nineteenth-century aesthetics. But let us *increase* the emphasis upon rhetoric, insofar as we can replace aesthetics with the classic trio (rhetoric, poetic, dialectic) that Mr. Blackmur commended in his titular essay. If we really give poetics and dialectics their due, as Mr. Blackmur rightly exhorts, then we can safely restore to their rightful place in the study of language such major texts as Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* and Cicero's *Orator* and *De Oratore* (to which I would add at least the fourth part of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana,* concerning the rhetoric of Christian persuasion).

Thus, as regards the problems of "arson" ("demagogy and hysteria") we should train ourselves in the art of catching such doings *flagrante delicto,* as the systematic study of rhetoric helps us to do, whereas aesthetics could but coax us to turn our eyes elsewhere, in blushingly superior pudency. It is in this sense that one could call simultaneously for less rhetoric and more. Less, if you equate rhetoric with a mere excess of aesthetics (or "methodology," in Mr. Blackmur's special definition of that term). More, if, having discounted aesthetics, you can systematically allow for the full development of rhetoric, dialectic, and poetic, all three.

We have said there is no concern with Poetics in the article (inasmuch as the concern with audiences and with the business of writing is divided between the two provinces of rhetoric and the sociology of literature). As for Dialectic, if you mean the systematic analysis of dialectical resources and embarrassments, you would have to say that it, too, is missing. But a universe of discourse being what it is, every writer necessarily employs a dialectic *implicitly.* And we have tried to suggest that Mr. Blackmur here seems to follow the dialectical pattern indicated in his comments on the *fides quaerens intellectum* formula.

I have in mind particularly the question he asks at the start: "How do we go about converting energy and momentum into intellect?" Here, presumably, "energy and momentum" would be analogous to *fides,* in its role as a kind of initiating intuitive power like faith. Then the cultural task would be to find for this raw drive a truly intellectual counterpart that might properly "curb" it. And if we may postulate the principle of "reversibility" that Mr. Blackmur has advocated as a guide for critics generally, we may assume also that the underlying power would in turn "question" the intellectual frame arising out of it.

The design is complicated, however, by the fact that the underlying power (which he apparently respects, though his essay gives no indication that he did more than sense it beyond the barriers of nationality and language) is not attaining its true cultural counterpart. Instead, it is being corrupted by the "new illiteracy" (the "*kitsch* culture," with its "lip-service, eyewash, and pi-jaw," its "professionalism," and its "packaged goods").

There thus seem to be *two* kinds of "reversibility" here. First, there is a drastically actual kind, whereby the "new illiteracy" that arises in response to the underlying "energy and momentum" provides but a grim caricature of *intellectus* (in a form that not only does not mitigate the original potentialities of rawness but intensifies them). And second, there is a hoped-for ideal kind that would truly represent the underlying possibilities, and thus in its refinement would be expected to act as a "curb" on them.

If I am right in this summary of the dialectical pattern that is at the roots of the essay, I would say that it has one great shortcoming: its failure to show

us evidence of a *wholesome* "energy and momentum" that would be even remotely a match for his evidences of cultural corruption. In brief, the materials for a *fides* are very scant in this article, while the materials for a false *intellectus* are profuse. That is, there is no detailing of a *fides* (as regards whatever evangelical possibilities there may be in the seething local situations which he studied). There is very little of an *intellectus,* in the good sense. So, for the most part, there is little to strike our imagination and thus to feed our contemplation (or "vision") but a very persuasive picture of *intellectus* in the bad sense. We cannot know whether this was all there was to see, or all that Mr. Blackmur was able to see first-hand, beyond the difficulties raised by nationality, language, and tourism.

In any case, it seems to me an exceptionally interesting report, vigorously written, the record of an alert observer. Secondarily, it is an act of self-portraiture: the situations it describes are seen through the eyes of an expert bookman who writes of cultural atrocities and cultural possibilities very entertainingly.

Perhaps to some extent one bit of Hegelian dialectic, as modified by post-Marxist thinking, does figure here after all. I refer to the fact that, though Mr. Blackmur's bias is strongly idealistic (as is perhaps the case with all educators, whether they know it or not and whether they want it or not), he does quite often fall into passages where something much like a variant of the Marxist genealogy is followed. (I refer to a dialectic whereby, beginning with conditions in the economic substructure, one derives from them the state of the ideological superstructure.) Thus, he talks about his alienated intellectuals as an economic class whose consciousness is formed in response to their economic conditions. And again and again, his concern with problems of *literature* centers not in questions of poetics but in matters of *livelihood.*

"Culture is the mind's money," he says, "and everybody not forbidden wants a little of it in his pocket, if only to rattle. Culture is the cash and carry of human action: the one form of currency we ought not to debase, or inflate, but must enrich." That is to perfection a shift of accent, a bright dialectical maneuver whereby, though starting on the material slope, before the sentence is finished, all is spirit.

Addendum

I still don't feel that I did wholly right by either Mr. Blackmur or myself as regards the scholastic formula, *fides quaerens intellectum.* The difficulty is that an element of controversy kept interfering with the main thing, which was merely a matter of discussion.

It is to me a notable fact about an author's dialectic when a three-termed system is transformed into a two-termed system, with corresponding subsidiary adjustments. But there is the further consideration that the "faith-reason" alignment was repeatedly debated as a two-term system (quite as St. Anselm's formula, when considered in itself, gives no indication of its place in a three-term system).

In an earlier draft I also considered how the "faith-reason" pair, while retaining its dyadic form, later becomes critically transformed in its *attitude.* For instance, in Schopenhauer's pessimism, "faith" becomes merely a blind universal craving (a *Wille* that might more accurately be translated as "sheer

restless meaningless drive"), while "reason" becomes the conversion of this subhuman metaphysical greed into *Vorstellungen* ("ideas" that are on the slope leading to the psychoanalyst's concept of "rationalization" or the political theorist's concept of "ideology").

For a critical variant of the three-term system, see Spinoza's *Ethics,* Book II, "On the Nature and Origin of the Mind," Proposition XL, Scholium 2. There the three stages are: (1) *opinio,* or *imaginatio;* (2) *ratio;* (3) *scientia intuitiva.*

An analogous problem figures in purely aesthetic theory. There can be the stress upon art as self-expression, or the stress upon art as communication (evocation, medium for affecting an audience). Most writers of my generation began in a period when self-expression was a slogan; but the stress upon communication gradually gained prominence, until now "communication" is almost a password in certain circles.

Accordingly, critics might choose to debate the issue in those terms. One group might stress self-expression as the essence of art, others might stress communication, others might compromise by proposing a judicious mixing of the two (such mixtures being conceived in accordance with either the notion that self-expression and communication reënforce each other or the notion that they act as a check upon each other, or that they do a bit of both). Or we might proceed by the addition of a third term, thus:

(1) Art begins in *self-expression,* spontaneous utterance, as with outcries, oaths, interjections.

(2) Such motives are matured by translation into the great complexities of language that owe their development to the use of language as a medium of *communication* (itself rooted in forms of practical coöperation).

(3) But the work of art moves *towards the transcending of both self-expression and communication.*

This third stage would come about in the following way:

The artist would choose themes that engrossed him personally ("self-expression"). He would develop them by the use of a public medium ("communication"). But in the course of perfecting his work, he encounters possibilities purely internal to the medium; and he may exploit these possibilities "to the end of the line," regardless of either self-expression or communication.

Joyce's later work is an example of this development. Few writers have paid greater attention than he to the public lore (the materials of communication). Yet he did not develop this material purely from the standpoint of its communicability, but rather from the standpoint of its ultimate possibilities (possibilities that might be more efficiently exploited if he deliberately rejected the standards we usually associate with communication). In following out such possibilities, he would presumably be answering a call (he would be "expressing himself" in a very full sense). Yet the resulting product would be *consummatory* in a way that could not be adequately confined to either of the first two stages, but would have something of both in being beyond both.

Thus the three theological stages involved in St. Anselm's formula would have as their secular, aesthetic analogues:

(1) *Fides:* self-expression.

(2) *Intellectus:* communication.

(3) *Contemplatio:* consummation.

THOMAS H. CARTER:

Rhetoric and Southern Landscapes

EUDORA WELTY: *The Bride of the Innisfallen.* Harcourt, Brace.
FLANNERY O'CONNOR: *A Good Man Is Hard to Find.* Harcourt, Brace.

Even superficially, these two volumes seem to invite a joint consideration: both are composed of short stories published variously in magazines; both are written by Southern ladies of impressive talent. What really links them together, however, is their authors' firm, professional reliance on a highly developed, somewhat personalized use of rhetoric. In regard to matters of style, Miss Welty's book is the more dazzling. In most of her collection, in fact, the language pretty much *is* the story: the rich surface, tending more and more to assert its right to corporate existence, doesn't have any particular subject to which it can adhere. For this reason, almost all *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (which embraces many places, many people) is disappointing. Miss Welty's new stories are, of course, full of good things—mainly minor characters illuminated and permanently fixed by a single memorable gesture; the characteristically sharp, evocative descriptions—but their substance, with one or two exceptions, is trivial.

Since the first story, "No Place for You, My Love," establishes the tone for the collection, it may be well to take a hard look at it. At a luncheon in New Orleans, a man and woman (no special man or woman: they aren't even named) exchange bored glances. Strangers to each other and the city, they slip away for an afternoon drive in the bayou country, dance and eat at "Baba's Place," engage in a perfunctory kiss, and return chastely to New Orleans. Miss Welty invests these characters with a vague identity, most successfully in visual terms; we know enough of them to predict exactly how their excursion will turn out; but essentially the reader hasn't much to grasp. Miss Welty, with commendable restraint, refuses to inflate a casual incident with unearned significance; but dramatically, since it happens to nobody, it can have no meaning of its own—as the characters themselves seem aware. As the couple dance together, the woman remarks:

> "I get to thinking this is what we get—what you and I deserve . . . And all the time, it's real. It's a real place, away off down here . . ."

The lady has a point. In nearly all of *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (I would except a single story, "The Burning"), the place is far more real than anything that occurs, or the shadowy people to whom it occurs; it usurps, one feels continually, the vitality that ought to belong to the characters—who appear to have no inner, or even mental, life whatsoever. The following account of Baba's Place (in which the people are merely part of the general atmospheric effect) should serve to illustrate the nature of Miss Welty's virtues, as well as suggest with what, in a sense, the protagonists are competing:

> The dog lay sleeping on in front of the raging juke box, his ribs working fast as a concertina's. At the side of the room a man with a cap on his white thatch was trying his best to open a side door, but it was stuck fast. . . . . Moths as thick as ingots were trying to get in. The card players broke into shouts of derision, then joy, then tired derision among themselves; they might have been here all afternoon—they were the only ones who had not cleaned up and shaved. The original pair of little boys ran in once more, with the hyphenated bang. They got nickels this time, then were brushed away from the table like mosquitoes, and they rushed under the counter and on to the cauldron beyond, clinging to Baba's mother there. The evening was at the threshold.

Similar reservations must be made about the title story and "Going to Naples," both narratives of some length. What appears to be economy of technique turns out, instead, to be a poverty of incident and characterization; hence the over-emphasis on local color. Miss Welty, one suspects, has surrendered to the same kind of descriptive impressionism that tends, with increasing frequency, to vitiate the recent work of Elizabeth Bowen—the attempt, that is, to coerce a fine style, which is only sometimes facile, into carrying the whole burden of the fiction.

In *The Bride of the Innisfallen,* the stories finally begin to acquire something of a needed solidity when Miss Welty returns at last to what is more or less her home ground; I mean that vast literary region called the South. In "Kin," two girls—they are cousins, but one has been away—visit a country uncle dying at Mingo, the old family place "miles from anywhere." The old man, so ill his tongue must be moistened before he can speak (or protest), has been completely taken over by "Sister Anne," a rural connection whose habit is to hover vulture-like over the deaths of her relatives. Miss Welty renders her sharply in action; the dreadful woman has typically moved the nearly dead uncle into a plunder room while she has leased out the front parlor to an itinerant photographer—who has promised, in return, to take a free picture of her. As they leave, one of the girls says: "Mama's too nice to say it about Sister Anne, but I will. . . . . She's common." Miss Welty catches the complex relationship of these characters to one another—the city to the country cousin, Mamma to Sister Anne, the fierce dying old man to the world—and conveys them exactly and affectionately; her acute perceptivity is grounded, one judges, in both observation and familiarity.

The best piece in the book, certainly the only one that represents Miss Welty at anything like her best, is a brief Civil War episode, "The Burning," which exhibits admirably her gift for the improbable but (in her hands) believable event. Two Southern ladies are sitting in the parlor of their fine house, which Sherman has ordered burned, when two Union soldiers and a horse enter the front door:

> It was a towering, sweating, grimacing, uneasy white horse. It had brought in two soldiers with red eyes and clawed, mosquito-racked faces—one a rider, hang-jawed and head-hanging, and the other walking by its side, all breathing in here now loud as trumpets.

Using a shifting point of view (which remains, I should say, actually the author's), the story moves quickly to an hallucinated but inevitable conclusion.

The house is burned, the two sisters and a slave girl stroll through the ashes of nearby Jackson, the sisters—shockingly enough—hang themselves; and the little slave returns to the ruined house to salvage a few items and then go down river. Before leaving, however, she pokes in the ruins and, finding a cracked mirror, thoughtlessly apes her dead mistresses before it; in so doing, she not only recreates vividly the image of what has been destroyed, but adds a new dimension to the action. Miss Welty, this once, subordinates her style to her story, judges the precise weight of her incident, and gives it, in fictional terms, exactly what it is worth.

The selections in Miss Welty's book seem altogether occasional (which is, in itself, not necessarily a bad thing). Whatever unity the book has, it owes to the presiding and, in this case, wavering sensibility. Flannery O'Connor's first collection of short stories, on the other hand, demonstrates a high degree of thematic integrity; it is a tough-minded, solidly realized piece of work. That is why it is possible to speak of her book as an entity; Miss Welty's must be taken in pieces.

It is true that Miss O'Connor does establish a certain incidental unity of landscape—which happens, I take it, to be mostly Georgia farm country; and certain types of people, generally solitary women determined to hold on to their land, constantly recur. But such unity, of the kind that Mr. Shelby Foote sets out methodically to cultivate, is at best external. In Miss O'Connor's case, it is scarcely systematic; and one imagines that it is primarily a matter of expediency, of perhaps the availability of experience.

What distinguishes Miss O'Connor's collection from *The Bride of the Innisfallen* is that, in any rigorous sense, most of Miss Welty's stories are actually nothing more than artfully extended sketches. There is nothing blurred about *A Good Man Is Hard to Find;* it is held together, probably unintentionally, by a consistent internal coherence. Miss O'Connor, with no trace of self-consciousness, writes with a firm moral awareness that, serving as a steady point of reference, continually shapes and informs her fictions. Her stories are not didactic, because her moral sense coincides with her dramatic sensibility: there is nothing explicit about them, or moralizing; but she is a fabulist just the same.

The title—*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*—states quite literally the burden of the book. All Miss O'Connor's characters tend to be fragmentary, incomplete persons suffering from a frustrated or perverted religious impulse; they are trying either to go somewhere, to escape, or doggedly to retain what they have. ("A Circle in the Fire," for instance, details even the attempt of three boys to recapture what is for them a kind of Paradise; when they find it can't be done, they seek to burn it.) The characters seldom recognize the source of their motivation, of course; and Miss O'Connor, who doesn't employ the device of a central, ordering intelligence, refuses to spell it out. The meaning of most of her stories needs to be approached on two levels: that of the events and characters rendered, and that of the symbolic texture of the language.

The title story, a *tour de force* of the grotesque, operates on the level of satire: Miss O'Connor reduces her characters largely to a single dimension. A family of dreary people encounter and are subsequently murdered by an insane criminal who elects to call himself The Misfit. Within this unpromising framework, Miss O'Connor achieves a delicate balance between gratuitous tabloid brutality and allegory; the members of the family eventually slaughtered are

presented with such naturalistic skill as to make the reader a little uncomfortable —which may be what Miss O'Connor has in mind. Just before she is shot, the old grandmother finds herself saying, " 'Jesus, Jesus,' meaning, Jesus will help you"—she is trying to "convert" The Misfit to save her own neck—"but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing." The Misfit, like the hero of Miss O'Connor's earlier novel, *Wise Blood,* demands a religious absolute: if he can't have God on his own terms, then he must somehow destroy Him.

Miss O'Connor's language undoubtedly owes something to her section of Georgia; but one judges that it properly owes most to Miss O'Connor. Her style is lucid, economical, and close to actual speech; it is, as it ought to be, an instrument. With some frequency, Miss O'Connor employs traditional religious imagery; but more often her symbols are naturalistically self-contained, defined by and operating within the story. Her rhetorical effects are carefully prepared for. In "The Displaced Person," for example, one Mrs. Shortley must receive the erroneous impression, which subconsciously she desires, that she is an agent of God. Early in the story, Miss O'Connor describes a peacock:

> "So beauti-ful," the priest said. "A tail full of suns," and he crept forward on tiptoe and looked down on the bird's back where the polished green and gold design began. The peacock stood still as if he had just come down from some sun-drenched height to be a vision for them all.

Twenty pages later this description is incorporated into the texture of Mrs. Shortley's mountain-top vision:

> Suddenly while she watched, the sky folded back in two pieces like the curtain to a stage and a gigantic figure stood facing her. It was the color of the sun in the early afternoon, white gold. It was of no definite shape but there were fiery wheels with fierce dark eyes in them, spinning rapidly all around it. . . . . She shut her eyes in order to look at it and it turned blood-red and the wheels turned white. A voice, very resonant, said the one word, "Prophesy."

Because the reader already knows that Mrs. Shortley suffers from a bad heart, and that her vision could have resulted from the effort of climbing the hill, he anticipates—almost—the stroke that constitutes Mrs. Shortley's ironic apotheosis:

> . . . her huge body rolled back still against the seat and her eyes like blue-painted glass, [she] seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country.

One of Miss O'Connor's most compact stories, "Good Country People," is in its way as surely predicated on the fact of human damnation as Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand." Its chief character is an embittered, aging woman who, though she has a Ph.D., has returned home to live on her mother's farm; her given name is Joy, but she has legally changed it to the ugly Hulga to complement the childhood loss of a leg. As part of her policy of thorough-going nihilism—as well as to confound her simple mother—she attempts to seduce a young drummer peddling Bibles; this man, whom her mother has just called one of the

"good country people," manages to steal her wooden leg and leave her stranded in a hay loft. The unexpected climax has the effect of a chilling revelation:

> "And I'll tell you another thing, Hulga," he said, using her name as if he didn't think much of it, "you ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!" and then the toast-colored hat disappeared down the hole and the girl was left, sitting on the straw in the dusty sunlight.

A Good Man Is Hard to Find does not really suggest, as it may seem, that Miss O'Connor is negative or despairing; the disciplined exuberance of her tone, if nothing else, would contradict that; and her fine humor reflects on her characters a fair share of saving grace. A good man, in the root meaning she attaches to the phrase, must always be hard to find; but one feels sure—which is what counts—that Miss O'Connor would recognize him at once. Meanwhile, with her second book now in hand, it seems unduly conservative to speak of her as "promising"—though her future work promises much. What she has already accomplished seems an achievement of high order. In an era of pseudo-Hemingways, Faulkners and Warrens, there is no one quite like her.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN:

Ballads for Americans

The Ballad Book (MacEdward Leach, editor). Harper.

The enormous popularity of dubious American folksong in our time has never really affected the scholarly study of the ballad, which goes on classifying its Scandinavian analogues and disputing its 18th-century emendations oblivious to the planging of guitars all around. MacEdward Leach's anthology *The Ballad Book* is the first real attempt to bring the two groups together, to extend Professor Francis James Child's generally accepted corpus to include American "ballads" like "The Jam on Gerry's Rock" and "Betsy from Pike," and, presumably, to supplant Kittredge's one-volume edition of Child in classroom use with this Anglo-American medley.

My disagreement with Professor Leach regarding the origin, structure, and function of the ballad is fundamental, and a great many general statements made in his introduction seem to me demonstrably untrue on the evidence of his own texts. The communal theories of ballad origin from which my own views derive are in turn dismissed in his introduction as the fallacies of 19th-century scholars "led astray by lack of precise definition." At least three statements in Leach's introduction, however, I can heartily concur with and I consider points that badly need making: that the ballad is not the wild and irregular verse form the Romantic movement took it to be, but is rigidly conventional and regular *in terms of its tune;* that "by and large the ballad tends to degenerate" in folk transmission, not polish gemlike; and that the finest American ballads, with "a spontaneity and a seriousness that the others lack," are the Negro ballads, such as "John Henry," "Frankie and Albert," and "Stagolee."

Leach prints about 180 of the 305 ballads to which Child gave numbers,

some in as many as four variants, with an emphasis on recently collected American texts and Danish analogues in English translation. These are intelligently selected, and except for a few copying errors (stanza 19 of "Tam Lin," stanza 14 of "The Twa Magicians") they are carefully edited. All but a handful have some headnotes, in the scholar's moderate and sensible tone, even where they hit obvious absurdity, such as Phillips Barry's theory that Lamkin was a leper (Leach calls it "a rather wide speculation"). The editor tends to have a good eye, or ear, for "the nice literary hand of the 18th-century poet," and to know a broadside when he sees one. He includes at least one good early text unknown to Child (of "The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry"), and adds English broadsides and a few English songs Child did not consider ballads if he knew them ("The Bitter Withy," "The Corpus Christi Carol," and "The Bold Fisherman"), where the weight of later opinion would tend to agree with Leach. For the most part, however, his additions are "American ballads by origin or adoption" and American variants of Child ballads.

Leach includes no music (except for two examples in the introduction), arguing that ballad tunes cannot be indicated accurately, and then admitting delicately that problems of space and expense may have had something to do with his decision. Despite his view that "ballad structure cannot be studied accurately without constant reference to the music," he does not even indicate (as Child did and almost everyone since has) where the tunes may be found. An appended "Selected List of Ballad Recordings" may have been assumed to make up for this lack, but it is so haphazard, incomplete, inadequate and uncritical as to be just about useless. The list includes recordings of songs not found in the book, and distinguishes neither short-play records from long-play nor out-of-print records from those obtainable. Its only critical feature, an asterisk to indicate recordings "especially recommended for authenticity," seems rather arbitrary, awarding its cachet to several notorious Greenwich Village hillbillies and refusing it to, say, a Finnish recording (not authentic as what, Finnish?).

To those of us who believe that the ballad is a very ancient anonymous communal work originating in ritual drama, that it derives from the sung text of an acted sacrificial rite, and that its making is a closed account, Leach's insistence on individual modern authorship seems pointless. It seems to leave him no distinction at all between ballads and broadsides, other than the author's talent, and catches him inevitably in the contradiction between such statements as "the originators of the traditional ballads had no literary pretensions, no literary sophistication," and "One needs only to read 'Mary Hamilton' or 'The Unquiet Grave' or 'Child Waters' or 'Sir Patrick Spens' to know that poets and skillful artificers were behind these ballads." In either case of modern authorship, what can he mean by saying that "Sir Lionel" is "a tale that goes back perhaps to the cult of the Great Mother"?

Leach believes that many, if not most, ballads are historical ("a stirring local event occurs in a community"), but he keeps running into the absence of history: "The name of Sir Patrick Spens appears in no Scottish or English records," "Percy, said to be killed at 'Chevy Chase,' was in command of the English" fourteen years later. His insistence that the structure or form of ballads is realistic and journalistic, like the "modern newspaper story," rather than mythic and dramatic, leaves him unable to see the obvious miming in such ballads as "The Maid Freed from the Gallows," which he believes *developed*

into children's game, drama, and *cante-fable* in America, and leads him flatly to base the Robin Hood dramas on the ballads, rather than the reverse. Leach's sense of the ballad's function as story-telling and reportorial, rather than magical and symbolic, leaves him constantly puzzled over what seem to him to be mysterious accidents of transmission: "The Lass of Roch Royal" is "rather rare in spite of the fact that it is a moving and tragic story"; of "The Bonny Earl of Murray," "One wonders why all the dramatic story was passed by, by the ballad maker."

Insofar as the ballad is ritual in origin, dramatic in structure, and magical in function, its true affinities are not with tearjerking English broadsides like "Young Edwin in the Lowlands Low," which Leach aspires to add to the canon, but with ancient English ritual and totemic songs like "The Cutty Wren" and "The Derby Ram," which he ignores; or with "The Lyke-Wake Dirge," which he prints in the introduction only to show the difference between its lyric character and the narrative structure of "Willie's Lyke-Wake."

Fundamentally, our judgment of Leach's ambitious attempt to revise Child's corpus must hinge on the problem of the ballad in America, and here if we do not watch our steps we are apt to sink out of sight in waving fields of corn. Variants of about a hundred Child ballads have been recovered in this country through assiduous labor, and most of them have ill repaid that labor. There are occasional touches of life and vigor, as in a Tennessee "Johnnie Scot" in which wicked King Edward asks:

> "Is this young Johnny Scot?" he said,
> "Or old Johnny Scotling's son,
> Or is it the young bastard-getter
> From Scotland has come in?"

Most of the American texts are corrupt and wretched beyond belief. A Vermont "Elfin Knight" has for refrain:

> Fluma luma lokey sloomy
> From a teaslum tasalum templum
> Fluma luma lokey sloomy.

A North Carolina "Earl Brand" turns into jumble:

> "My father is of a regis king,
> My mother's a quaker's queen."

American folk etymology seems to be so half-hearted, so disinclined to push until *some* meaning is obtained, that William's foreboding dream of slaughtered swine in "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" becomes in a Kentucky variant: "I dreamed last night of young science in my room." A Nova Scotia refrain for "The Gypsy Laddie" goes:

> Red Lady dingo, dingo day,
> Red Lady dingo, dingo Daisy;
> Red Lady dingo, dingo day,
> She's away with the Gypsy Daisy.

Where the American Child ballads are hopelessly deteriorated, corrupt and meaningless in good part, the American originals are mostly (with the excep-

tion of the Negro songs) the inept work of broadside writers and hacks, fairly described by Leach as "stiff with literary starch," or "insipid and cheaply sentimental." In a few cases (such as "Young Charlotte," written by Seba Smith) we know the poet's name and have the printed text before it went into folk dissemination. The American ballad problem is actually not a problem of origins at all, but one of folk transmission, the sentimentalization and deterioration of the Child ballads and the downward migration of the products of broadside writer or hack poet. If "Jesse James," "Casey Jones," and their like are narrative songs of considerable value, we need not call them folk ballads to appreciate them, and can fairly recognize that they are the compositions of anonymous song writers of ability, and that folk-singing no more entitles them to be folk products than it does "My Old Kentucky Home" or "Sweet Adeline."

The true English and Scottish popular ballads are something else again. At their best[1] they are an unrivaled tragic poetry with the sort of dramatic tension we are most familiar with in Attic drama. The shock we experience in Euripides' *Medea* when the infanticidal witch appears above the stage in a chariot drawn by dragons, in place of the *theophany* we have been expecting, is the same sort of shock (deeply disturbing and just on the edge of the ludicrous) we get at the ending of "Gil Brenton":

> Now or a month was come an gone,
> This lady bare a bonny young son.
>
> An it was well written on his breast-bane,
> "Gil Brenton is my father's name."

The pity and terror of Oedipus' recognition of his crimes in Sophocles' play is the same pity and terror we experience in the last line of "Edward," and we may even find it in the fourth stanza of "Lizie Wan," when Lizie replies flatly to her brother's question about her health:

> "I ail, I ail, dear brither," she said,
> "And I'll tell you a reason for why;
> There is a child between my twa sides,
> Between you, dear billy, and I."

When the innocent May Catheren will not burn in the bonefire at the end of "Young Hunting," and she is taken out and the false lady who slew Hunting is substituted, all we need be told is that the fire:

> O it took upon her cheek, her cheek,
> An it took upon her chin,
> An it took on her fair body,
> She burnt like hoky-gren.

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[1] In an article "The Language of Scottish Poetry," in *The Kenyon Review*, Winter 1954, I suggested as candidates toward a classic tradition: "The Wife of Usher's Well," "The Twa Sisters," "Edward," "Clerk Saunders," "Sir Patrick Spens," "Johnie Cock," "Mary Hamilton," "The Bonny Earl of Murray," "Child Maurice," "Young Waters," "The Baron of Brackley," "Lamkin," "The Cruel Mother," "The Twa Corbies," and "The Daemon Lover."

Leach's glossary defines "hoky-gren" as "blanketed fire" (the term is somewhat disputed), but what the line says, in contrast to "her fair body," is definable in no glossary. Richard Blackmur says of Yeats' "A Deep-Sworn Vow" that "the words accumulate by the simplest means an intolerable excitement," and there could be no better description of the poetic language of the ballads, as we get it, say, in "The Hunting of the Cheviot":

> For Wetharryngton my harte was wo,
> that euer he slayne shulde be;
> For when both his leggis wear hewyne in to,
> yet he knyled and fought on hys kny.

It is this quality in the ballads, the language of purest incantation, that no poet has ever been able to get in his ballad imitations (with Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" perhaps coming closest). It comes into the ballad from myth and rite, and if Yeats achieves it in poems like "A Deep-Sworn Vow," as a hymn in a private redemptive religion, it is wholly lacking in such of his imitation ballads as "Father Gilligan."

The quality of the ballads that our poets *have* been able to achieve (I think of such poems as John Crowe Ransom's "Captain Carpenter") is their irony, the underplayed contrast in "Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet":

> Lord Ingram wood her Lady Maisery
> Into her father's ha;
> Chiel Wyet wood her Lady Maisery
> Amang the sheets so sma.

It is the irony of Musgrave in "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard," caught in bed with the lady by Lord Barnard and on the edge of his doom, replying to Barnard's "Doest thou find my lady sweet?":

> "I find her sweet," quoth Little Musgrave,
> "The more 't is to my paine;
> I would gladly give three hundred pounds
> That I were on yonder plaine."

Perhaps the only profitable relationships of our poetry to our folk tradition (and the great English and Scottish ballads *are* our folk tradition, not "The Little Mohee") are ironic ones, are in fact gestures emphasizing our distance from a ballad folk, like the Ransom poem.

I once believed that the modern poet could draw on the rhythms of ballads and blues with Auden, on the flatness of folk speech with Fearing, and I can recall writing a pronunciamento in college to that effect. I am now somewhat more sceptical. It may be that all our poets can learn from these great ballads is how to write something very different, another kind of incantation, more like negative magic, drenched with irony. Empson's "Missing Dates," that ominous, lilting anticipation of radioactive fall-out, is the sort of ironic building-at-some-distance-from-the-ruins-of-balladry that I mean. Perhaps what MacEdward Leach's ambitious *Ballad Book* can do best is remind us that America is not really what the chauvinists would have her, the heir of all the ages, but only a late colony of Europe trying very hard to lay the foundations for a native culture.

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